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VOL. II.

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# TERTIUM QUID:

*CHAPTERS ON VARIOUS DISPUTED QUESTIONS.*

BY

EDMUND GURNEY,

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1887.

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## *WAGNER AND WAGNERISM.*[1]

In bunten Bildern wenig Klarheit,
Viel Irrthum und ein Fünkchen Wahrheit.

GOETHE.

THERE is no more characteristic page in the whole of Rousseau's *Confessions* than the one where he describes a summer day in the woods, passed, without the faintest approach to love-making or flirtation, in the society of two young ladies whom he met riding there, and with whom he made friends by helping them to ford a brook. He left them in the evening after sharing their picnic meal, and never saw them again; but he asserts without the slightest doubt that, on examination, he finds this to have been the happiest day of his life. Not a very striking or creditable discovery after all, it will be said. But not one in a thousand of Rousseau's congeners in habits and temperament would have

[1] The following pages on Wagner were written some months before death closed his career—a career which, whatever criticism it may demand, at least demands from every candid critic the homage due to rare genius and dauntless consistency.



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had the originality to make it or the honesty to avow it. And the moral of the incident, though most immediately applicable to those who confound satiety with enjoyment, has in reality a far wider scope. The instinct of going straight for information as to what we really like to the best authority, namely ourselves, is truly a rare one. It would be a blow to most of us, could our feelings towards very much that we reckon among the pleasures of life be suddenly viewed from a standpoint as determinedly individual as Rousseau's, and divested of all reference to what we are expected to like, or vaguely suppose that other people like. So viewed, the various scenes which figure in novels as types of complete well-rounded enjoyment might often startle us with their patchy and scrappy appearance. Balls, parties, art-galleries, the Opera—the things the world says that it likes and then believes what it says—what flaws might not each in turn reveal to one and another of us? What vistas of weariness might we not look back along and recognise for our own?

It is naturally in the domain of Art that this thought becomes most oppressive. For social fictions much may always be said; on the whole, probably, the world would be worse instead of

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better off if people never smiled and looked pleased at meeting unless they were really glad to see each other, and if all social gatherings were abandoned at which a majority of those present were inwardly bored. But with Art it is different. There is not the slightest reason why any human being should spend a single minute of his life in looking at a picture, or in listening to music, unless he either takes interest in it now, or expects by looking or listening to be enabled to take interest in it or something like it hereafter. In some cases the interest admits of wide varieties, and may be woven of many strands; it may have more direct relation to knowledge than to feeling; it may lie in suggestion and illustration rather than in form and colour; it may be archæological and historical as well as æsthetic. But for most people it must needs be primarily the latter, whatever other elements be interfused. And there is one art in particular in which everything extraneous to the æsthetic element is lacking; in which the past as such has no existence; in which those who are dead speak to us indeed in clearest language, yet reveal to us dimly, if at all, what manner of men they were, and tell us nothing of how they lived in the world or how they conceived of it. Their revela-



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tion to us, so far as we have the key to it, is not of what was, but what is, is our life as much as their life, a *now* not a *then*, a renewal not a record: the temples they have made for us were

> 'built
> To Music, therefore never built at all,
> And therefore built for ever.'

Surely, then, it is just to this art that we should look for an exceptionally clear distinction between true and false popularity, between enjoyment and vogue; here, if anywhere, might we hope to escape the blight of conventional admiration and pleasure done to order. Accordingly we look round and ask if it is so. And the answer is a mixed one. There is truly a sense in which Music is, of all the arts, the most literally and directly and clingingly popular, and the one whose popularity can be by far the most clearly and definitely evinced; on the other hand, there is a sense in which Music is, of all the arts, the greatest sufferer from the rarity among us of Rousseau's inveterate habit of calling things enjoyable when, and not before, he found them so.

This latter sense has to do partly with peculiarities in the mere presentation of the art, and not belonging to its nature. Music is (with the exception of a single branch of Poetry) the only great

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art in whose service *performers* as well as creators are enlisted, and it has the defect of its quality. Performance opens the door to vanity; and vanity is the paralysis of artistic achievement. That society-music should usually be a nuisance follows directly from the treatment of it as a means of personal display; and it is a solemn thought that the time draws near when perhaps half—not the wise half—of the virgins, now in the schoolroom, who have been 'taking up the violin' will be turned loose on the drawing-room. Nor can we regard as much more than society-music of another kind the stale vocal frippery which season after season sees expensively paraded on the alien stage of our national theatre.[1] It is not, however, so much with

[1] More distressing than even the purely conventional presentation of what is joyless is the deliberate substitution of it for something better, on the blind assumption that it is what people prefer. I have known a great singer, advertised to sing *Waft her, Angels*, and able to do so in such a manner as would have steeped the very soul of all his hearers in beauty, jauntily defraud them of their spiritual rights, and substitute a trifling ballad, on the ground that they were 'a popular audience.' Of course they clapped, and only a minority knew what they had lost. So again, I was listening one Bank Holiday to a first-rate band in Regent's Park. The programme contained the names of several good overtures and good German dances, and far on in the second part the words *Hallelujah Chorus*. So warm was the appreciation of the audience, undamped even by pelting showers, that, though I knew the effect of this masterpiece to be a certainty, I could not forbear waiting to watch

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misfortunes of this sort as with peculiarities lying deep down in the nature of the art, that I want here to connect Rousseau's test; the more fitly inasmuch as it was *à propos* of the music of his own day that Rousseau himself, as it happens, set a signal example of its application.

Detachment from anything that has the pretension of a progressive artistic movement can never in itself be an enjoyable condition. Something seen ought, *primâ facie*, always to go for more than something not seen; and failure to admire what seems widely admired must always tend in the direction of self-distrust. In such a case only a resolute escape from the buzz of the immediate present to the great principles and features which distinguish permanent from ephemeral work will restore the confident sense belonging to the wider view—the sense of being after all on the side of the great battalions. The way of arriving at this wider view by applying these principles is what I want here to indicate. But though not a long or arduous, neither

it. I might have known better. The programme was steadily adhered to till that point, and then some jigging piece of tuneless rubbish was substituted. Being there, I watched the faces lately so radiant, and the feet and umbrellas that had been so busy tapping time: not a gleam on any face, not a movement of any foot, and I am thankful to say on this occasion not a sound of applause at the end.

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is it exactly an amusing way; and this is a bull which it will be well to take at once by the horns. To be at once sound and sparkling is rarely given to the wine of musical criticism; and in separation, while the body of fact is specially dry, the bubbles of fancy are specially innutritious. We have, no doubt, a special and semi-technical literature of real value, whether in programme-analyses of particular works, not meant to retain their flavour in detachment from place and performance, or in permanent studies of particular composers; but in any more general and impersonal talk about this singular art, reality and common sense are terribly handicapped. Most students of the *Oper und Drama* must have admired, as in a dream, the earnest minuteness with which every sort of conscious reference, theoretic and practical, is read into the past history of Opera and its public; the only point of view omitted being the true one which recognises in the *genus* opera-goer, through all its varieties, a wholesale indifference to theory, and a quite unpractical habit of enjoying what it may and enduring what it must. So on contemporary questions, one may encounter in the writings of Wagner and his school page after page of quite delightful reading, as long as one can abstract oneself from

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all thought of music and language as one has actually experienced them. 'Melodies' which last a whole evening; 'infinite form'; union of Poetry and Music, 'each at its highest,' while yet both emanating from a single inventive source—or if from two, at any rate from a dramatist with music sufficiently on his brain to be able to accept Wagner's *dictum* that the sole test of worthy dramatic writing is suitability to be sung throughout, and from a musician in whom literary sensibilities are so dominant as to render him barren of notes, until fertilised by the minutest verbal details of the poem where his *melos* is 'implicit'; a consequent mutual interdependence of words and notes extending to the 'finest ramifications' of the phrases; the sufficiency of alliteration, if unintermittent, to keep 'feeling' on a four hours' stretch of poetical excitement; the deliverance of Music from the burden of time and the materially-based laws of rhythmic stimulation, which have held it in such timid awe; the abandonment of the difficult search—difficult even to the facile Haydn, and to Beethoven matter for raving and stamping—after those rare combinations of sound which shall arrest and fascinate the attention, and which are unnecessary now that every variety of human emotion turns out to be expressi-

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ble in sound-material at a moment's notice by a vague sort of poetic inspiration, and can be turned on and off as easily as the horns or the big drum. It all seems so comfortable for all concerned, till one remembers that the greatest melodies in the world, though years may have gone to their making, vary in length between a few seconds and a few minutes; that form is as essentially finite in time as in space; that even taken in its loosest and most ambiguous sense, and with the aid of devices and modes of amplification which are out of the question in Opera, a musical form could not well be made to cover half an hour—while, in its more vital and definite sense, a few score of bars are the limit of the stretch in the direction of infinity which it will stand without either (1) going back on its own phrases, or (2) changing to something else, or (3) falling to pieces; that no considerable musician, with the possible exception of Wagner himself, has ever shown himself so much as a tenth-rate poet, and that not one in a hundred of even *his* most conscientious alliterations has any relation to feeling at all; that while by far the greater part of first-class dramatic poetry is eminently unsuited, an immense amount of less noticeable verse is eminently suited, for dramatic musical setting; that notes and words, being things

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absolutely disparate, can artistically concur only by both doing their independent duty from their independent resources, and so 'ramifying' into phrases of independent significance and independently coherent growth; that in Music the spiritual power is so rooted in the temporal, that definite and unchangeable relations of time-length, felt as such, belong to the inmost nerve and fibre of musical vitality; that Music will artistically express human emotion only on the one condition that she shall first artistically impress human ears; and that there is no royal road to that impressiveness, by which a composer can shirk the pursuit of definite (and therefore extremely finite) forms in the dim region of rhythmically directed impulse, or the fashioning forth from the shapeless material, often by slow degrees, of that which he may first have divined only in shadowy outline. And here every clause shears off a glory from the brilliant Wagnerian phantasy, and substitutes a piece of dry truth. Every clause, too, if fully traced out, would become only truer and drier, and might demand the reader's attention to abstract-looking terms like 'key,' and 'tonality,' and even to more distinct technicalities like 'modulation' and 'diminished sevenths'; in place of the familiar words and concrete images

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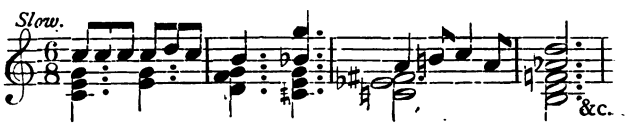
and vivid glimpses of life and nature with which the critic of visual art can light up his page. Not that there would be any difficulty in proving to the most casual reader that, in mechanically whistling 'Tommy, make room for your uncle,' he has been exhibiting the essential meaning of tonality and modulation as truly as if he had written a symphony; or that the amused surprise at the chorale-like parody of the same melody in a recent London burlesque—




was ample guarantee for the general susceptibility to the artistic use of diminished sevenths. But it will be enough here to refer as a basis to two cardinal distinctions; of which one marks off Music as an art from other arts, and the other defines the two great elements of which Music itself consists. Music, then, is, first and foremost, a *presentative* and not (like Poetry, Painting, and Sculpture) a re-presentative art; its distinctive function being unceasingly to present us, and uniquely to impress us, with things peculiar to itself, and unable to draw their impressive quality from any extraneous source,

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and in that sense always 'absolute,' to whatever further connections they may lend themselves. And its elements are *abstract form* and *abstract colour*, *i.e.* form and colour which occur nowhere outside it.

There is something so stale in the very look of these distinctions that I almost blush once again to write them down; yet the full point of them, which was never so important as now, is almost habitually missed. Everybody knows, indeed, that the melodic and harmonic combinations of Music cannot portray particular scenes and people in the same way that the forms of Painting can; everybody recognises, too, that a tune is an *arrangement* of notes, and something different from the particular sort of tone-colour or *timbre* of the particular instrument on which the notes are rendered. But press these axioms a little further, or expand them into truths only just less elementary, and what sort of recognition do they get? Do not nineteen out of twenty concert-books practically deny that in music, at its highest, no less than its lowest, the freedom from obligation to portray or represent extends just as much to *emotions* as to scenes and people, and that the most distinctive impressions made by music are

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emotional after a sort as little definable by a list of the passions as the sound-forms themselves by the lines of geometry? Again, does not the fashionable habit of just giving the passing glance of a single hearing to highly-wrought works absolutely set at nought the fact that from every point of view the form, which may have cost nothing, and which almost invariably takes some acquaintance fully to reveal itself, is quite beyond all comparison more important than the colour, which may have cost hundreds of pounds, and which reveals itself in a moment?

It will be convenient to pursue the latter topic first; and an instance or two may make it plainer. Mozart, let us say, writes an air, as an item in an opera, for the whole of which he receives, perhaps, a quarter of what sopranos of the future will receive nightly for singing it. The air is a world's wonder; but unfortunately he has left, just before the closing bar, a place where the singer will be allowed to introduce a cadenza. She seizes the opportunity—would, indeed, hardly feel that she was acting honourably if she did not—occupies a couple of minutes with trills and roulades, which exhibit the remarkable constitution, not of Mozart's brain, but of her own larynx, and comes to a con-

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clusion. It would not be hard to apply Rousseau's test here, and to show that though many of the audience thought it was the trills, it was really the tune, that they liked the most—being truly more akin to gods than to birds, and more at the mercy of a brain than of a larynx. But apart from this, let us look at what we have got. We have, first, Mozart's form and the vocalist's colour combined in the performance of the song; then the colour without form in the trills; is there now any third stage in which we shall get the form without the colour? The answer is obvious. We shall be able to summon up that form next day without getting the prima donna to call on us, as with sufficient experience we shall be able to summon up much more complicated ones; or if we have not sufficient 'ear' for this, we shall at any rate recognise and enjoy it when rendered in some far less exceptional and expensive colour. So far as we live in the kingdom of Music at all, that form will become, either at once or on reiteration, one of our permanent and familiar possessions there. It might even have become so without any prima donna at all, and *à fortiori* without her trills; in other words, its life is not confined to a few rich cities. Or again, Schubert writes a pianoforte-duet, that is, a set of

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connected forms to be rendered in the limited tints of pianoforte tone; for which, as usual, he gets nothing. Years afterwards it is divined that the piece was conceived as a symphony, and it is arranged for instruments, and set before the world in all the rich and varied array of orchestral investiture. All the better, of course: but the essence of it, that in it which it took a supreme musician to produce, was there before, just as much as in the songs of his which have been a joy to thousands who have never heard them sung by an exceptional voice. If Schubert had had to wait for prima donnas and orchestras, we should not have known much about him.

'But,' it will be asked, 'what is the bearing of all this on Wagner and Wagnerism?' Simply this: that colour has become the bane of Music, and that Wagner and his orchestra have been one chief cause of its becoming so. 'But surely,' it may be objected, 'you cannot reckon it against Wagner that he could not produce his effects without an elaborate orchestra, any more than you could reckon it against Wellington that he could not have won Waterloo without the Prussians: he never meant to.' Perhaps not; but that some most legitimate effects absolutely demand an orchestra

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is no contradiction to this far more important fact —that all great composers, and others in so far as they have at all partaken of greatness, have won recognition simply and solely by strains which will outlive the hour of performance; which, even if scored for an orchestra, can dispense with the present blaze and actual sonority of orchestral presentation; adopting, it may be, some humbler guise, or else asserting themselves to the purely inward ear—whether of neophyte or expert, whether as a four-bars' melodic subject or as a whole symphonic movement—in the full uncontrollable glory of their form. Such quiet moments may outweigh the tedium of many a sonorous evening. And, indeed, such music as about ninety per cent. of the bars in the *Götterdämmerung*—stuff that can be rendered just endurable for one evening at the cost, say, of a thousand pounds, by the resonance of its dead and the ruin of its living instruments, by the natural tone of a superb band and the unnatural torture of an ultra-superb voice—makes an addition to the sum of human happiness which no one whose personal predilections do not swamp his arithmetic could compare with that of any single *morceau* of *Don Giovanni* or any single page of the *Messiah*.

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'But has not Wagner,' it will be said, 'produced such vital strains?' Of course he has: if he had not, we should not be talking about him. They are what give him a lasting place among the great —were they more abundant in relation to his whole production, one might say among the greatest—of the musical hierarchy; but unfortunately they are just exactly *not* what his theories support or account for, and just exactly *not* what is representative of his influence on others. No one, after marvelling at the opening tune of *Tannhäuser* or the opening act of the *Meistersinger*, goes home and writes a twin to it; but it is only too easy to take the hint that bits of impressive or attractive motive are things as important to *ménager* as they are hard to make; and that the public will enter no protest if the gaps between them are filled up with declamatory odds and ends, provided something on the stage be more or less occupying their attention, and the accompanying crashes and currents of orchestral noise be sufficiently full and varied. Why spend time in racking one's brains like Haydn, or stamping and fuming like Beethoven, for ever seeking out and rescuing from the dead waste of dispersed sound-elements the rarities of melodic and harmonic form, for ever toiling, Pygmalion-



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like, over those vexatious delicately-poised organisms whose limbs and features must gather into lovely shape in the unity of close vital combination, or not at all—when it will do as well to tack on bar to bar, and passage to passage, that have never gathered shape out of dispersion, nor found their life in unity; to stir the many-hued sound-waves, and call them 'dramatic' for now lapping, now thundering on the ear; to lash chaos into iridescence, and call it alive because it glitters?

Here, then, in the dazzling wealth of the modern orchestra, lay the great temptation; and Wagnerism in modern music means, before all things, succumbing to it. Not, of course, that in an opera the orchestra need be pedantically restricted to its highest mission, that of revealing, or helping the voices to reveal, really noble form. The form may be far from melodically inventive, may even run very much to mere figure-passages or chromatic scales on a rudimentary basis of brass and drum, and yet, as long as it is rhythmically coherent, may produce really successful and exciting scene-painting; as notably in the ride which opens, and the fire-charm which closes, the last act of the *Walküre*. But such scenes, necessarily few and far between, are not in the least representative of

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the verbal parts of the opera; and it is in these latter that Wagner's orchestral opportunities, flanked by his theory of 'spreading his melody boldly,' lead perpetually to such disastrous results. Professing to cast off Beethoven's shackles, *i.e.* the conditions of key and time by which alone successions of sound can be made organic, he 'throws himself fearlessly into the sea of music;' and sinking, finds himself naturally in the variegated home of invertebrate strains, things with no shape to be squeezed out of, no rhythmic ribs to be broken, tossed hither and thither, as hard to grasp as jelly-fish, as nerveless as strings of seaweed. And to realise what this entails on the hearer, we have to translate these shapeless shapes, just like any other sound-forms, into terms of motion—of something which we do not just look at, but have in a way to live: they mean *our* enforced flurry, *our* active impotence. But their creator is wise in his generation. Give the public from a couple to a score of firm bars they can seize and feel reliance in, and keep their eyes employed; and on those terms their ears will be quite content to stray about without landmark or clue, arrested a moment by the trumpets, looking vainly for direction to the voices, bustled on again by the fiddles (to whom, as to the rest of the



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orchestra, the chase is the best fun in the world), any way and every way, for the next quarter of an hour. Or, if they are in danger of turning restive amid these 'passages that lead nowhere,' these keyless flounderings on the ever-shifting quicksands of diminished sevenths, let one of the established motives crop up now and again for their support, and the faithful creatures will welcome it as an undeserved gratuity.

But *are* they quite so content? We seem to have got a long way from Rousseau; but what would he have said? He stated very distinctly his opinion of Rameau's recitatives, 'que tout le monde admire en bâillant:' how would he have regarded the 'noble declamation' of the modern 'melos'? Brave words, and still confronted, after the lapse of a century, with the same humble fact. Successions of sound which have no melodic cogency, which as they proceed impress the ear with no sense that their notes ought to have, or to have had, this direction or duration rather than that or the other, not only have no possible element of nobility, but are all exactly on a par. The unshaped, the fortuitous, the abortive, as such, admits of neither development nor degree; and it would specially have interested Rousseau to remark that

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an enormous proportion of the notes sung by Wotan and his companions, and standing not in musical subordination to some interesting orchestral motive but on their own declamatory legs, might just as well have been written by Rameau as by Wagner. Still, I think that on the whole he would have admitted a considerable improvement. Not only are Wagner's dramas, however crude in conception and lame in language, yet often redeemed in parts by well-imagined scenic effects; but none of his representative works are wanting in splendid musical features. The second act of *Lohengrin* itself has, between the part which is strongly repulsive and the part which is feebly attractive, about a score of bars of that ineffable kind which makes one doubt whether music should be called a spinal or a cutaneous affection. But, clearly, if the scores are ever to become thousands, the first point is that the somewhat blind combination of faith, hope, and charity which supports the public through the formless tracts should not be mistaken for an *artistic* exercise; and that each inarticulate member of that public should learn explicitly to distinguish mere sensuous thrills and transient surprises of the ear from the true abiding objects of his and every musician's ideal world.

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Some natural tolerance of ungrasped or ungraspable sound may be admitted: there are doubtless persons who easily resign themselves to regard its presence as a vaguely emotional background to the passing scene, getting subdued or emphatic, bright or gloomy, at appropriate places, like the gestures of the actors or the clouds that figure so largely in the Wagnerian stage-effects. But the average opera-goer, the 'naïve layman' for whom Wagner expressly professes to write, is far more distinctly 'musical' than this; and, while accepting as the normal operatic dispensation an immense amount of sound that has no significance for him, still lives musically only for the passages of tangible form—genuine specimens of what I have elsewhere called the 'Ideal Motion.' And by this I do not mean merely bits that are rhythmically and tonally coherent; for Wagner's phrase-building, even where not incoherent or violently strained, is often singularly uninventive; witness (to take a single instance which can be suggested without music-type) the shamelessly frequent piling up of a sham crisis, by the mere repetition of a tuneless fragment on successively higher steps of the scale. Still less do I mean mere bits of *Leitmotiv*, real or spurious, which may dodge in and

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out of the petty hubbub of the *Rheingold*, or drift despairingly amid the turmoil of the second and third acts of the *Götterdämmerung*, too helpless themselves to help even a drowning ear.[1] I mean passages of genuine musical invention that can be welcomed and clung to; passages in which the ear's path seems new indeed, but preordained; whose mastery the ear owns in the process, not of being dragged about at their mercy, but of itself mastering them. And these, for all the treating them as belonging to 'one large melody,' and concealing their transience by the avoidance of frank full-closes, are often just as much scattered morsels

[1] The list of ninety motives set out in that wonderfully humorous little book, *Guide through the Music of R. Wagner's 'Ring of the Nibelung'*—which, not content with the 'dusky harmonies of the cooking-motive and the coaxing crawling-motive,' familiarised us with the 'spook' and with the mysteries of 'brangling' and 'brustling'—is made up in great part of minute fragments of note-combination, arbitrarily selected and interpreted, and having no pretension to any melodic character—some of them moreover occurring only once, so that it seems impossible to find in what possible sense the term *Leit-motiv* can be applied to them. The manner of demonstrating the relationship and transformation of various members of this list may be perfectly exemplified, without the use of music-type, by the following extract from an almost equally amusing work, the *Benjamin Franklin Primer*: '*Nag* is an English term derived from the Latin *equus*, a horse, from which we get *equine*. *Equi* is dropped, and the final *e* changed to *ag* for euphony.'

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as if they were embedded in *recitativo secco*—just as much the plums of Wagner's as of Verdi's confectionery. Music of the most individual and haunting kind it would indeed be absurd to demand throughout a long operatic scene. But there are many grades from the order of excellence which ensures vivid and loving remembrance to that which merely ensures pleased and active recognition on acquaintance; and sufficient individuality to satisfy the latter test is surely the least we can accept in the majority of the musical sentences of any scene that aspires to the dignity of healthy popular art.

'But how splendid the plums can be when we get them!' Yes, indeed; that is what so greatly complicates the Wagner question; simply because no musician approximately so great as he on his day has had approximately so few days. Professing to 'spread melody' over interminable dramas, over libraries of music-paper, he is really the *tit-bittiest* of composers, as St. James's Hall delights to find. What may be the accurate measure of his greatness, as judged by his best efforts, we need not here particularly inquire: a valid answer must depend not on argument but on evidence, scarcely yet attainable, as to the width, the depth, and above

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all the permanence of the effect. It may be worth remarking, however, that for those whose personal instincts on the matter are equally removed from both extremes of current opinion, the setting of this best work of his in the very highest class is, just because of their genuine admiration of it, a more vexatiously puzzling phenomenon than the description of it as simply dull and unmelodious. In *Tristan*, for example, which contains considerable tracts of exciting and, for Wagner, unusually sustained beauty, is not the cloying quality at least as distinctive as the exciting, the sense of strain and mannerism at least equal to that of achievement? To the melody, even at its finest, there clings a faint flavour of disease, something over-ripe in its lusciousness and febrile in its passion. And this effect is strangely cumulative. Steadily through the whole evening one feels a growing sense of being imprisoned in the fragrance of a musical hot-house, across which the memory of some great motive of Handel's or Beethoven's sweeps like a whiff from breezy pine-woods by the sea. Or take a more compact instance, where, even if there lurk a certain strain of coarseness, there is certainly no hint of disease, the familiar overture to *Tannhäuser*—a piece of such

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superb popular qualities that, had Music done nothing greater, she might well hold up her head among the arts. Only—when one thinks of the *Leonora*? How the sphere of musical possibilities, which seemed so wide and perfect, breaks up on a sudden to unfathomable depths and heights; to ignore which is surely no true compliment to the lesser work.

The pursuit of such comparisons would carry us too far, even were it possible to make it profitable. Keeping to Wagner himself, one may still find the problem sufficiently puzzling, and the innocent question, 'Are you a Wagnerite?' the hardest in the world to answer in anything under five minutes. How singular is the art in which it is even possible for so lovely a will-o'-the-wisp as that burden of the 'Rheingold, reines Gold' to lead on the trustful ear into so blind a morass; lightened indeed by some melodic rays from the fire-god, but not to be forgotten or forgiven even when, after two hours' eclipse, the 'pure gold' of the earlier strain flashes out on the further side! How strange must be the conditions of invention, for the brain that had filled the air of Europe with the haunting delight of the march in *Tannhäuser* to produce afterwards in the same *genre*, as an elabo-

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rate masterpiece for a great occasion, anything so turgidly tame, so saliently flat, as the main 'subject' of the *Huldigungsmarsch*! To do Wagner justice, however, he has often shown himself tolerably knowing as to where the plums come: in the *Walküre*, for instance, he has sweetened one of the longest of operatic love-scenes with the flavour of a single one, and has spread out another, like jam, through pretty well the whole of the *Meistersinger*—which alone would go far to account for the just popularity of those delightful works. But it is this very fineness of the plums which is a chief aid to disguising their paucity. It enables the composer to take advantage, not only of the long habituation of the operatic public to not dreaming of finding more than a small fraction of their repast artistically exhilarating, but also of their modesty; in that, finding a certain amount of exhilaration of a fine quality, they are always ready to attribute the sparseness of it, not to his want of invention, but to their own want of insight. Then, too, those opposite modes of listening, the drifting and the alert, which we just now distinguished, though typical are not constant. Few ears perhaps exemplify either of them for long together. They shift and alternate almost as uncertainly as sense

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and nonsense, form and fog, in the actual strains; and the facility of transition for the listener means also the facility of imposture for the composer, in the turning to fraudulent account of that indiscriminate cloak of colour which in these days he can throw at will over every part of his work. All the more imperatively must the alert attitude, and the right of verdict which it gives, be urged on the public. For, indeed, except those to whom Music presents itself, not as an art of engrossing beauty, but only as a diffusive stimulant favourable to some independent play of thought, few can really so surrender their ears as to find pleasure in restless sonority for many minutes at a time. In a favoured minority (especially if committed by a previous pilgrimage to Baireuth) the swallowing of dry unsweetened doses of 'noble declamation,' though rather suggestive of sulphur without treacle, may produce some pardonable self-satisfaction—the Teutonic pleasure-taker's diligent pride in fulfilling his task getting quite a cultured tinge from a vague notion that this sort of thing was highly relished by 'the Greeks.' But that the 'naïve layman' is not careful to measure the dose, means simply that he takes the affair *en bloc*; that this is 'music,' which is of course presupposed to be

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enjoyable, and comes all in one performance with what really is enjoyable; in short, that it has never occurred to him to ask, with Rousseau, 'Did I find that last minute worth having? Do I want another like it?'

'But,' it may be said, 'are you not getting quite away from the normal conditions of average musical appreciation? Does not the more vivid enjoyment almost habitually come in fragments?' Now, while altogether demurring to this in respect of the numerous classical works which have won the truest popularity in this country, I admit of course that non-perception of form by any particular hearer is no proof of its absence, and that the blaze of sonority may cover fulness as well as emptiness. Rousseau's question might well be answered in the negative by many an honest amateur, on first introduction to many a masterpiece. The only mode of distinction I can here suggest is the *subjective* one, the much-ignored test of repeated hearings (best realised often in pianoforte arrangements), whereby the forms, if they are there, may be seized and recalled—a test as truly satisfied of course by Wagner in his great moments as by any one else, and only the more recommended by his self-stultifying dread of it; by his

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express scorn of any theatrical music which is at all reproducible by untheatrical means; and by his express declaration that his 'melody' is not meant to be seized and recalled, and that any one who complains of it on that score might with equal wisdom seek to whistle the vague multitudinous hum of a forest. *Objectively* to prove the emptiness I speak of, and the amazing hardihood of Wagner's claim to have advanced on his greatest predecessor by applying the principles of symphonic construction to Opera, would require technicalities; and indeed could only be adequately done by confronting hundreds of pages of his figureless counterpointless see-sawings with some popular samples of the closely-wrought movements of Beethoven, perspicuous through all their elaboration, and with all their living threads woven into a single larger life.

'But,' again it may be urged, 'music in Opera is not a *structure* but a *stream*; it is not meant primarily to gratify the ear, but to illustrate the passing action; it is expressive and dramatic; who wants it to be symphonic?' I, for one, certainly do not; only Wagner so repeatedly assures us that he does; that that is just what it ought to be, and what (in spite of being a forest-hum) his own is.

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However, let that pass; grant that it is to be expressive; what are the senses and the conditions of the expressiveness? The two views on this subject admit of no compromise. Either musical sounds can be artistically expressive of extra-musical ideas and emotions without giving the ear anything it wants or cares about on its own account—[1] can press on to the common centres of artistic sensibility and association without paying their respects on the way to the head of their own department; or they cannot. I say *artistically* expressive: *mechanically*, no doubt, unbeautiful sounds *can* be expressive, and that in two ways. By a mechanical *convention*, a particular personage or idea may be 'expressed' by a particular label of notes, just as well as by the printed letters of a name; and by a mechanical *symbolism*, dismal sounds may express dismal emotions, and soft sounds soft emotions, and wabbly sounds uncertain emotions, and emphatic sounds determined emo-

[1] This is an under-statement. Passages of the *Oper und Drama* go the length of asserting an absolute incompatibility between dramatic expression and the power of independently satisfying the ear. Equally amazing is the statement that it is impossible for *invention* to appear in any composition belonging to a recognised class or scheme, as aria, minuet, rondo; which is just like saying that invention cannot appear in any poetry written in a recognised metre.

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tions. In either case the sounds are read or recognised by the lamp, not of beauty, but of reason: they make the hearer think to himself, 'this is to show that the hero feels soft,' or 'that is to suggest that the heroine feels wabbly'—'this combination means the motive of the treaty, and that the motive of the forge.' Granting to the symbols, in their broader aspects, some æsthetic content of the sort above referred to, in the various ethical colourings, exciting or depressing, light or solemn, that may tinge the impression of sound on a simply drifting ear, I need hardly point out how transitory and intermittent must be the value of such a background for dramas constructed on ordinary principles—not consisting of a series of highly emotional tableaux, but of scenes where words tell the whole story, and where the personages carry on the logical machinery of intercourse in the usual way. The idea of making a dim emotional atmosphere for scenes of the sort of ponderous pettiness that abounds in the *Ring des Nibelungen* is truly as vain as that boasted interpenetration of the finest tissues of note and word, which has so conveniently enabled *soi-disant* poetry and music to shelter their shortcomings each behind the stalking-horse of the other. But even were the possibility of such

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a vague atmosphere continuous, we have seen that normal ears will never for long forget their instinct of closer attention. A forgetfulness which would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of Opera if engendered by an exciting libretto, is not likely to engender itself under the influence of a dull one. And where the attention does not get what it can musically assimilate, the only scope offered to it will be in discovering such appropriateness as it may in the purely external character of the sounds; in observing, *e.g.*, that the instruments have a little bit of flurry when the sentiment is violent, calm down again when the sentiment is slow, or take lugubrious steps when the sentiment is doleful; and in recognising here and there the labelling phrases. And it can scarcely need proof that such abstract qualities as recognisability and appropriateness, in things which are neither pleasurable nor useful, do not come even within the outer circle of the æsthetic.

Clearly, then, if sound is to get beyond the barren stage of being readable, if it is to become artistically expressive and not merely crudely symbolic, it must take on something of its own, *i.e.*, it must take on independent musical character by developing definite musical contour; just as



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the crude symbol of early pictorial art might be developed, say, into definite human contour. And of the presence and the interest of such contour the unreasoning ear is the sole arbiter. Its arbitration, too, is decidedly despotic, and its scrutiny of the strictest. For, first, it must be remembered that the ear has a rare way of attending to one thing at a time. It cannot shift about like the eye from point to point, and grasp in a moment a multitude of relations. The section of the series now being evolved before it is what engrosses it; and even in the most elaborate work, the sort of relations it may perceive in that section to other more or less contiguous sections are broadly reducible to the two simple ones of recurrence (with or without modification) and contrast. And secondly, the things attended to by the ear being things *per se*, and having their life in independence of that outer life from which our knowledge and ideas are gathered, are, even when most suggestive of that outer life, yet wholly lacking in those instantaneous glimpses down numerous vistas of association which word after word opens up in Poetry. This is enough to suggest how it is that, while in Poetry and Painting neutral and even ugly things may be grouped round beautiful things

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or minister to a fine strain of thought, in the presence of which their presence is perceived and accounted for, in Music what is ugly and incoherent reveals itself in unrelated nakedness. And the ear's strictness is thus at once accounted for and justified. It must take kindly to the strains which salute it, and find in them the coherent stuff that it wants, before it will at all credit them with emotional messages or pass those messages on further. It must frankly enjoy the label before it will permit the slightest artistic appreciation of the labelled idea. Only give it its due, and it will open the channel with astounding, almost with indiscriminating, readiness to every sort of artistic association and fusion. But no outside signs of expression, no noisy stamps of determination, no spasms of exaggerated intervals, will take it in; no juggling with the labels, or mixing them up together, will move it to more than scornful amusement, unless the juggling be the true magician's juggling, and produce the musical magician's prime result—beauty. And inasmuch as this beauty is essentially an attribute of form, and musical forms are built, just as much as human ones, out of definite elements, the substitution in Opera of the dramatic *stream* for the symphonic *structure*—how-



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ever rightly descriptive of the general arrangement of the larger musical sections—is a perpetual trap. For that most intimate and organic sort of structure which lies in the constant vital necessity of each bar as it stands to its neighbours as they stand, can never be abandoned while the ear holds the keys of emotion—a musical ear being nothing more or less than one which is percipient of such structure.

Here again, then, is the place for self-questionings *à la* Rousseau. We need not go even this short way in the examination of the claim of structureless sound to be dramatically expressive, before asking ourselves whether expressiveness so produced is what we like. The personages of the *Ring* make many pages-full of remarks which are simply typical of their dull and disreputable characters, but which —since words and music profess to well up from the same inward source—it would be self-stultification to say cannot be set to notes; and as it would be highly inappropriate to give them beautiful notes, Wagner has appropriately given them ugly ones. Let the hearer discover for himself how far the abstract fact that they satisfy that condition is a nourishing piece of imaginative food; or how far, under the surrender of the musical sense to

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hours of sustained incoherence, it becomes really a subject for delighted contemplation that the story is also a trifle higgledy-piggledy, and much of the dialogue very unsuited to fine rhythmic setting. And if he is so fortunate as to be able for a time to take refuge in passive self-abandonment to the shifting tides, and can forget to care what particular ways the notes go, so long as he feels that a good number of them are going, let him still consider how far this formless effect, this relapse to the vaguest, most general, and least musical of musical attitudes, testifies to the 'bold regeneration' that we hear so much about, and is calculated to 'be the fair beginning of a time' in Art.

And here we have really merged into the assertion and vindication of our second cardinal point —Music's constant and characteristic independence, alike at its highest and lowest, of ideas and emotions known and nameable outside itself. The reason why Wagner has been safely able to ignore this elementary fact in musical psychology is this—that the clear perception of it demands something quite alien both to the actual impressions of the art, and to the habits of mind of most of those impressed—namely a moment or two of deliberate analysis. For want of this, those whose every

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intuition of musical beauty exemplifies the fact are often the first to deny and resent it. 'You talk about beautiful music not expressing things,' one of them will urge; 'why to me the bits of music I most care about express things beyond all words, whole worlds of emotion, and infinity and eternity into the bargain.' Quite so; that is accurate; that is a way they have; and it is just what is *not* (however much compatible with) the expression of this or that particular emotion—*i.e.* of that which is proved *not* to be beyond all words by being accurately definable *in* words, as gaiety, dejection, yearning, triumph. And whoever remembers the places where he gets this ineffable feeling will find on looking that, while it is only *occasionally* connected with the sort of definable expression which makes him say, 'That is very melancholy,' or 'That is very jubilant,' it is absolutely *invariably* connected with a piece of sound-movement of which each unit and fragment in turn has its irresistible rightness, and comes charged with the sense of a necessary 'whence' and 'whither'—that is to say, a piece of objective and organic form. But as long as those who truly enjoy do not exercise this amount of reflection on their enjoyment, then, however clear be their intuition, they will always be in danger,

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when they talk about it, of confounding the occasional and definable with the essential and undefinable emotion; and of attributing their delight in some passage of music, which is as much an individual object as the Venus of Milo, to some perfectly general ground—as that it 'expresses peace' —instead of to the fact of its notes going not any other way but just that one way; which is delightful to them, and able permanently to remain so, just in proportion as genius went to the divining it and fashioning it forth. And as long as this confusion is possible, Wagner and his school can always take refuge in the *ad captandum* fallacy that the expression of definable emotions and ideas is the one great thing for Music to aim at; can discredit the opposite view as a narrow plea for 'absolute music,' in the sense of music which has no need or power of fusion with poetry and drama; and can ignore the all-essential work of divining and fashioning forth the cogent ways for notes to go, to which the makers of modern music have devoted their whole energy, and which, so far from excluding any more definable sort of expression, will alone lift such expression out of the mechanical into the æsthetic region.[1]

[1] As Music stands so singularly apart among human interests,

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And I would fain pause for a moment on the wanton injustice that is done to Opera itself by not recognising that even here, in the very sphere where Music is summoned to take on the depiction of definable passions to the utmost of her power, the vague but powerful expression of these is but a fraction of what she has done and is ready to do for word and scene; that the emotional element in her which is her own, and therefore unnameable, is not on that account condemned to an isolated existence; that the ethical suggestion may become so fragmentary, or the tinge of special sentiment so faint, as practically to vanish in the atmosphere of purely musical delight, and yet that that delight will glorify and transfigure and seem part of the inmost essence of any at all artistic elements in that to which it is wedded. In that transfiguration, what is serious takes on sublimity, and what is ludicrous gets edged with loveliness; nay, even hackneyed things will become haunting, and com-

so the various things that can be said about it always seem to me in a special degree connected among themselves, and incapable of being supplied from analogy. The result is that any omission (and in an Essay of this length very much, of course, has to be omitted) may suggest a flaw. To guard myself against this, and still more against a possible charge of onesidedness and dogmatism, I may perhaps be allowed to refer especially to the chapters on Colour, Expression, Opera, and Criticism, in *The Power of Sound.*

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monplace things possessing. It would be an immense gain if composers would only put to various specimens of music commonly called 'expressive' the simple test of asking how far, if heard in detachment, each would inevitably suggest some particular nameable idea or sentiment and no other; and would thus learn explicitly to recognise how extremely loose and general are the conditions of external reference within which Music, *if true to itself*, may still be most genuinely dramatic in the sense of enormously intensifying dramatic effect. To those who had thus consciously confuted for themselves the central principle emphasised in almost every page of the *Oper und Drama*, we might readily concede the advantage of possessing, in word and scene, a definite starting-point, *raison d'être*, and control, for their inventive stream; without having always to fear the chartered libertinism so characteristic of modern 'dramatic' writing. And truly a theory which would exclude from the stage such music as half the solos in the *Beggars' Opera* and half the concerted pieces in *Fidelio*, as 'Batti batti' and the minuet in *Don Giovanni*, as the prize-song in the *Meistersinger* and the shadow-song in *Dinorah*, as the pilgrims' hymn in *Tannhäuser* and the gipsy-chorus in *Preciosa*—inventions whose power to

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impress the hearer may be proved in any popular concert-room to lie just in expressing themselves, but which borrow from their stage-concomitants almost as much romance as they lend—is negatively as great an outrage on this joint art of Opera as the positive one which 'unites' Poetry and Music by dogging bald words with intervals flung out of a bag.

Here, then, in the false theory of expression, lay the second great trap. The prosaic fallacy that the essence of Music is vague nameable expressiveness, instead of definite unnameable impressiveness, is only carried out by making the expressiveness itself mechanical and independent of any impressiveness whatever. And the root-fallacy was the more dangerous to Wagner, in that just as colour was the practical, so this is the theoretical mode of excusing and concealing the fitfulness of his enormous musical gift; besides affording scope to that other gift, always a hazardous one to non-literary art, of considerable literary ingenuity. Much might be said about the particular mode of support selected for the theory—the solemn joke of making out Beethoven (poor Beethoven! with his uncouth mutterings and shoutings, driving his invention along the rhythmic tracks where alone melodies will

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ever be surprised and caught) to have been dependent on 'preconceived poetical ideas;' and of setting a gulf between his sources of inspiration and those of his predecessors. Some of the ideas have even been written down for him by Wagner, in the mountains of flabby verbiage known as 'Programmatische Erläuterungen' which occasionally figure in our concert-books—impotent heavings of that portent of prose *Dichtung* which is so apt to entrap the Jonahs whom Poetry casts overboard. The convenience of this means of claiming descent from the greatest of musicians on the side of 'poetical ideas,' when musical ones too obviously fail, is undeniable; and a theory born of a deficiency may appropriately be bolstered by a blunder—historic neatly replacing melodic invention. But I must hurry on to a final word—as to the further bearing of these latter points on production in general. The first great bane of contemporary music lay, we saw, in displacement of coherent form by incoherent colour; the second no less certainly lies in a cognate displacement of steady effort directed to the distinctively musical exaltation, by random attempts at definite representation and suggestion. Wagner's successes in this line—*e.g.* the wonderful passage where Siegfried is breaking

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through the ring of fire [1]—of course defy imitation, because they result from splendid musical invention, in other words, from the presence of the distinctive exaltation; equally, of course, the *genre* without the invention is imitated. Would that the evil influence were confined to the theatre. But it only needs now to salute some loose jumble of images and sentiments as 'poetry,' for that alien parentage, which all great musical work from Handel and Bach to Schumann and Brahms scornfully disowns, to become a true Sycorax for the monstrosities of the modern programme-music; while Caliban can go through his pantomime bedizened in all the gaudy trappings, can wield all the thunderbolts and turn on all the lime-lights, of the wonderful modern orchestra.

And here, again, no hearer should be so humble as to refrain from asking himself how much he really likes it. A most natural impulse to that humility is found in the reflection that technically-

[1] Alas for the uninitiated! Having been forewarned of this passage, I felt my pleasure in listening to it distinctly increased by the idea that the hero's advance through the flames was typified by the manner in which the melodic strain seems again and again to force its way through the changing harmonies. What, then, was my chagrin, on consulting the *Guide through the Music* above mentioned, to discover that the strain was the 'slumber-motive,' and that what was really being typified was Brünhilde's repose!

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instructed musicians, who must 'know more about it' than he does, encourage and perform in such exhibitions. But it cannot be too strongly urged that the conditions of enjoyment in *performing* and in *listening* may be widely different, and that Music, being so much in the hands of performers, runs a peculiar risk from that very fact. Performance may be good fun, even for a voice which is wasting its sweetness on such desert airs as some of Wagner's recitatives. All skilful conquest of difficult things, and accurate thridding of labyrinthine things, and collaboration in the production of overpowering things, are exciting outlets of energy; and in these respects connoisseurs, who appreciate technical difficulties and can see how the thing is made, are more or less one with the performers. But I am speaking of the average music-lover: it is surely for him rather than for exceptional experts that Music must be held to exist. All this may be amusing for *them*: is it amusing for *him*, whose attention is mainly occupied in verifying the printed assurance that the noise means this, that, and the other? Or even if it be for a time amusing, is not that the utmost that can be said for it? unless or until perchance the strains wander, sure of a forgiving welcome, into the paths of musical beauty,

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still seeking there, if they will, such delicate suggestiveness of outer things as under Schumann's wand could make of a humble piano a joker of divinest jokes. At any rate, whoever it be who truly finds his poetry in the 'desolate disarray' of ordinary programme-images, and his music in their broken sound-reflection—if this is what he prefers to the art which is no more truly typified by *Volkslied* and chorale, by Beethoven's sonatas and Schubert's songs, than by the noble melodies that have won Wagner the popular heart—let him at least say so and recognise the distinction, that we may know where we are. For it would be speculatively interesting, however mournful, to mark how, so far as his taste prevails, the symbolism from which Painting and Sculpture were able to emerge, just because in their case it was frank and rigid and expressionless, need only seize in sound the chance of making itself ingenious and fluctuant and pseudo-expressive, to become the engulfing death of the sister art.

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## *A MUSICAL CRISIS.*

Virtù diversi esser convegnon frutti
Di principj formali.

DANTE.

IN writing a paper about Music for the general reader, there is always this difficulty—that, however modern and however popularly interesting be the topic selected, no profitable discussion of it can avoid beginning as it may seem a long way off, among quite fundamental conceptions, luckily few, but unluckily dry. In dealing with visual art, the critic is not obliged to start all his views from an inquiry into men's natural love of imitation, or into the reasons why church spires must be built point upwards, or into the most obvious implications of terms like form and colour. But in the case of Music, however cramped by its conditions, he will not gain in the end by ignoring them; his work may easily lose a place in science without finding one in literature. And the necessary

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conceptions may, perhaps, be galvanised into some sort of interest by representing them under the guise of *four fundamental paradoxes*, neither metaphysical nor technical, which truly mark Music off from all other arts, and round which every essential fact and argument about it may, I think, be shown to centre. Without further preface, then, Music is, of all the arts, (1) at once the most abstract and the most popular; (2) at once the oldest and the youngest; (3) at once the simplest and the most complex; (4) at once the vaguest and the most definite. Of these pairs of distinctions, the first has to do with the art's broad general attributes; the second with its history and mode of development; the third with certain varieties of actual structure, objectively regarded, which it now presents; the fourth concerns partly such objective varieties, and partly the sorts of feeling associated with them. It is in connection with this last pair that we shall find our chief key for criticism, and through it we may approach the question suggested in the title of this paper. But none of the pairs can be properly realised or explained without reference to the others; and a brief examination of the first three will lead us naturally up to the fourth.

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The *first* of the four paradoxes would be fitly placed, if only because it enables me at once to emphasise the apology that I have already hinted. However truly the popularity of this art may be one of the most important facts in the world, and one of the most stimulating to practical endeavours, its abstract nature is no less a positive bar to the sort of treatment which is so profoundly moving and exhilarating in the hands of competent critics in other walks. Eliminate all memory of Music from the world, and the events and sights and even the sounds of life would go on just as before: men would use their voices in speech, be soothed by the stream, be startled by the thunder. Conversely, eliminate all memory of the events and sights and noises of life, and still (if we could conceive existence under such conditions), while the subject-matter of poetical and pictorial and plastic representation and the inspiring uses of Architecture would wholly have disappeared, the essential message of Music to the ear and heart would not be lost; he who had known and loved a tune could know it and love it still. But the result is that he who does more than know and love tunes, and essays to talk of them, has no familiar region of natural and human beauty with



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which to compare them. It is for more fortunate critics to make the world itself seem richer from the standpoint of arts which extract and combine its beauties. While the forms of the musician's world are transporting him and thousands of his fellows with their beauty, the language in which he is constrained to deal with them, if he would avoid the stale froth into which Schumann's sparkling subjective fancies and Hoffmann's grotesque whimsicalities have now degenerated, seems doomed to be as sapless and unsuggestive to the general reader as if he were describing geometrical patterns. There is no avoiding the beggarly elements. The phenomena are not made up of parts separately suggestive or fit to be dwelt on, not of eyes and lips and limbs, not of sculptured arches and soaring minarets; but of this note, and this, and this, each quite abstract and insignificant, pieced together by dint of what looks more abstract still, namely various degrees of resemblance or relationship between them, into something which may turn out to be, if still abstract, yet the very opposite of insignificant, namely a fine tune. As Rip van Winkle used to say, 'That's all about it:' a street-boy, practically, knows as much; Beethoven, theoretically, knew no more; and any further

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description will be apt to run to adjectives and interjections, which supply not so much the grounds as the outlets of feeling. One can only ask the reader to do his part, and to make the words as concrete as possible by keeping some familiar tune before his imagination; which if he can do, however little technically a musician, he must consent to wake, *à la* M. Jourdain, to the fact that he has been at home in the mysteries of 'tone-relation' all his life.

It will be noted that the abstractness of Music extends even to its shapeless material. The mere sounds which it works up into its peculiar and coherent forms have no natural existence. Few and most fragmentary are the sounds, even among the so-called musical sounds of Nature, which present even for a moment such certainty of *timbre* and pitch as would adapt them for membership in a system of true musical notes. Nor is this fact without its bearing on the popular effect of Music; for as stimulation of the ear is, to begin with, a more arresting and impressive sort of affection than stimulation of the retina, owing to its normally lesser persistency and greater concentration in particular moments, so the rarity of distinctly musical tone among sounds increases the



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nervous effect. But it is in the shapes which art creates by the combination of these separate sounds, that the abstract character of Music, and at the same time its power over men, are fully revealed. Not among continuous sounds, however soothing, nor among random sounds, however sweet, not among murmurs of winds or waters or Œolian harps, but among consciously created and coherent structures, do its votaries wander; often delighted by their beauty, often puzzled by their complexity, often wearied by their emptiness; and ever and anon, it may be, startled and puzzled at finding the heart touched by forms so impalpable, the imagination haunted by shapes so aloof from all others with which the senses feed it. I shall have more to say hereafter as to this all-essential distinction of material and form; of the sounds in separation, whose colour or *timbre* (violin-tone, clarinet-tone, bassoon-tone, and so on) takes effect mainly on the mere physical organ, and the sounds in artistic combination, addressed to that higher faculty which discerns the particular combination as a true recognisable unity, whether a formed whole or a formed member of one. The extreme commonness of this faculty, of this habit of construing a series of tones under the unity

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of form, is one of the things we disregard only because it is so constantly before us. It is a faculty as truly exercised by the savage chanting his monotonous refrains, by the little child crooning over some scrap of melody, as by the expert who with the eye and the inward ear thrids the mazes of some elaborate score. And granted the commonness of the faculty, that very abstractness of its object-matter, which seemed hard to connect with the universal popularity of the art, becomes a ground of explanation for it. Even as savage chants can lash into furious delight men whose pleasure in other art extends, at most, no farther than an infantine pleasure in rude imitation, so it is just because the perception of more developed strains presupposes (beyond the commonest musical opportunities) no education at all, either of the senses or of the imagination or of the emotions, that Music can win its triumphs in modern cities where the eye is starved, can appeal to the prosaic many as well as to the poetical few, and can open a common world to those whom no other interest unites.

We pass now to our *second* paradox. Music is the one primeval art which we share with the brutes. Some of them produce indeed archi-

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tectural structures; but we have no reason to suppose that they derive any distinctive pleasure from them; and as mere works of utility they do not enter the province of art. That particular arresting quality mentioned as belonging to musical *material*, to sounds coloured with distinct musical *timbre* as opposed to the uncertain neutral sounds of ordinary life, simply needed nervous systems for its discovery. And the additional fact that these sounds were often producible at the will of a creature, by a conscious and exciting effort, puts them into a different category from those visible adornments, plumage and so on, which were a permanent gift of Nature to their passive possessor; so that in the deliberate exercise of the power for the sake of pleasure to the possessors or members of his tribe we see a veritable art-germ. But not only so; the germs of *form* are also found in the animal kingdom, in that appreciation of regularity of recurrence which, at its simplest, is almost as purely sensuous as pleasure in formless sound, and within the reach of comparatively simple nervous organisations. And it is this same recurrence which, when it assumes true regularity, we call rhythm; and which in the shape of a basis of regular accents remains, and will remain to the

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end of time, a characteristic of all series of sounds possessing wide permanent charm for human ears. Though appreciation of rhythm makes its appearance below the human stage, we need not go beyond our own time, and savage members of our own race, for the evidence as to the priority of the musical to the other artistic instincts. This is the better worth noticing in that the prominent quality of savage performances to a civilised ear is their monotony and hideousness; and though many have remarked the *precision*, few have remarked the *high development*, of their rhythmic element. I was much struck with this in the performances of the Zulus at the Westminster Aquarium, where not only was the device of 'syncopation' effectively used, but the still more *recherché* effect of double against triple time. This represents an advance of the artistic sense of audible form decidedly beyond the appreciation of abstract visual form evinced in the stars and simple patterns with which savages often adorn themselves; and to what is more developed we may reasonably attribute the earlier beginning. Evidence of a similar priority is found in the individual life, in the age at which babies manifest delight in bits of rhythmic stimulation.

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Yet in spite of this antiquity, Music is the one art, specimens of which, brought not merely from a remote past but from the Europe of a few centuries ago, not merely from barbarous communities but from the Athens of Phidias and Sophocles, must and would totally fail to convey to us the essence of what they conveyed to their original public, even if found, by good fortune, to be a stage or two removed from pure incoherent ugliness. This want of appeal to modern European ears of music other than their own, and the consequent dating of music, as we care to listen to it, from quite a modern epoch, depends not on any development of musical instruments, not therefore on any improvement of the colourings of Music, but purely on that further factor in musical formation which is not the rhythmic—namely, the gradations of *pitch*. Out of the infinite number of such gradations obtainable between the lowest and highest notes that the ear can apprehend, it is necessary that a certain limited number, a certain *scale* of notes at fixed intervals from one another, should be selected, and that combinations should be made wholly out of these selected items ; this is the condition for producing definite and recognisable combinations. Now this selection is in a great

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measure arbitrary. There are certain larger intervals which seem to have figured in all selections of any degree of development; but the notes selected between these main landmarks have varied greatly at different times and places; and no one can genuinely appreciate combinations built from the units of some different series from that which his ears have been accustomed to. Such combinations may appear to him only wearyingly monotonous, as in systems which use some but not all of the notes of his own system, *e.g.* old Scotch tunes playable on the black keys of a piano. But when the scale of notes is totally different from his own, the combination which to a familiar ear is a formed and pleasurable melody will strike him as simply an incoherent and fortuitous succession, the effect being, perhaps, most distressing in case of systems which use steps of pitch smaller than the smallest in his own system; as in Arabian music, which admits notes separated only by the eighth part of a tone, with the result that to a European ear the higher note sounds as if it was meant for the lower and taken grievously sharp, or *vice versâ*. Our own scale-system was attaining its final shape only about three centuries ago, and (it is needless to say) has proved its special excellence by the

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music to which it has served as a basis—the forms into which it has proved possible to work up the intervals that it presents. And thus it is that Music, though its roots are lost in an endless past, must for us mean modern European music, and that could we resuscitate even the civilised music of other times, our ears would fail to grasp or welcome it.

We pass now to our *third* pair of contrasts: in musical structure we recognise the simplest as well as the most complicated sort of artistic production. Regarded in one way, this merely carries on the idea of the last pair, that we can trace back the germs of Music and the musical faculty into further and simpler elements than those of other arts, the primary nervous stimulation being in nature far more elementary than the rudest sketch or verbal phrase. But the contrast between the simplicity and the complexity of Music has a sense far beyond this; a sense of paramount importance to a true view of its developed state. In Music, *as it now stands*, the simplest constructions hold a quite unique position, a pre-eminence quite unknown in any other branch of art: there is a sense in which they may be said to be throughout of far more vital importance than any more elaborate

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work. The history of Music is no gradual advance from the few touches to the many, from the bare outline sketch to the rounded completeness and nicely adjusted gradations of developed forms, where the simpler groupings get left behind like the naïve beginnings of other arts. Not, of course, but that in other arts we are familiar with the notion that the value of a work cannot be weighed by time or space or labour. Acres of canvas, covered with the work of many lifetimes, may not be worth a sketch of Leonardo's; libraries of epics and tragedies might be gladly surrendered to the flames to save a page of Sappho. But even though a rough sketch may reveal to the connoisseur—*ex ungue leonem*—that only a great master could have produced it, no one will maintain that it can or ought to reveal the glory of Painting to the world at large as truly as the more elaborated work. The case of Poetry presents, no doubt, a difference; for here small and unpretentious works may have qualities which the whole poetical public recognises as supreme, and, moreover, the greatest poems in the world live in the hearts of men more by short bits than is generally recognised. But to begin with, the simplicity of such gems is far less total than that of some musical inventions which produce the

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characteristic musical impression in the very highest degree, and demanded the very rarest power in their inventors. The *Daffodils* and *Full fathom five* and the lines about Francesca are simple, but we at any rate know of verse considerably simpler, as *Ba ba, black sheep*, and *Let dogs delight*: whereas a vulgar street-tune, a milk-and-water drawing-room ditty, is often less utterly simple in structure and in unity of impression than *Ein' feste Burg*, or than many a melody of Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, which has moved the human breast with all the might that it is given to Music to wield. But this is far from being all. The great fact is that short and graspable pieces of musical combination, limited groups of bars which the ear receives as close self-dependent organisms, are the indispensable nuclei from which more elaborate structures spring. A long movement will contain a limited number of such 'subjects,' acting as centres of growth for more extended passages in which their features reappear. This sort of evolution is entirely peculiar to musical structure. And it is to be particularly remarked that though one may call these cardinal subjects *germs* or *nuclei*, that description is in no way to imply imperfection. On the contrary, it is these that must be the pri-

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marily and vitally perfect things; they are not mere seeds which give birth to what is beautiful; it is their independent force and beauty which give the chance for the more elaborated and discursive beauties along the path of their so-called 'development.' Where those independent qualities are absent in the germinal motives, no ingenuity of treatment will give the supervening structure that power of wide appeal and haunting charm in virtue of which the greatest music in the world *is* the greatest.

In striking contrast to the character of seizableness and narrow limitation of length of these quintessential bits of music, whether *Volkslied* or *Leitmotiv* or symphonic 'subject,' stands the intricacy of the combinations through which the art of sound will lead the yielding ear. In a way, of course, a single large and magnificent building may be called more complicated than any piece of music, in virtue partly of the numerous purely mechanical problems of building, partly of the immense multiplicity and richness of detail. But it may be doubted whether the essential forms of any architectural structure exhibit such abundance of computation and artifice as find scope in the so-called scientific mazes of contrapuntal composition. It would be interesting

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to show how Music has suffered at different times from the abuse and from the neglect of this elaborative power; how the ear may be defrauded of its rights and balked of its due amid the involutions of an ingenious pattern, no less than amid the dispersion of a motiveless chaos. But our present point must rather be that it is to direct and melodic formation that we must look for redemption from either danger; and this will be best pursued in connection with our *fourth* and last paradox.

The various ways in which Music shows its definiteness and its vagueness may be best suggested by instances. The more extreme cases present no difficulty. There can be no doubt that any one who whistles a barrel-organ tune after hearing it has received from it a definite impression, æsthetic or not, according as he has or has not enjoyed it. Equally, there can be no doubt that any one whose ears have been introduced to some long and elaborate composition under the echoing roof say, of King's College Chapel at Cambridge, and who could neither whistle a bar of it, nor even recognise it again if he heard it, has received from it a vague impression, also very likely æsthetic. But there are two other cases of a more mixed kind. The less expert or familiar ear may find only

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vagueness in the very strains which to the more expert and familiar ear are as definite, for good or evil, as the barrel-organ tune. Each condition, for instance, is fairly represented in the performance of some vast polyphonic tissue of Bach's; the definite one by the majority of the chorus who render, and the vague one by the majority of the audience who gape at it. And lastly, the impressions of the more and of the less expert or familiar ear may present the difference, not of vagueness and definiteness, but of two sorts of indefiniteness which we may distinguish as *incoherence* and *vagueness*. The more expert or familiar ear may be in quite a different condition from that which we imagined in King's Chapel; it may quite detect all that is going on, and may even be in a position after several hearings to recall and recognise the sequence of the different portions; but if the sequence conveys to the hearer an impression of fortuitousness, of being made of parts not interdependent or necessary to one another in the sense that one bar or phrase demands or conditions the next, then he will no longer call the music *vague*, but *incoherent*. And on him such music will produce not an æsthetic, but a balking and fatiguing impression; while on another, who has not sought and so has

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not missed coherence, the impression may be as pleasingly vague, and consequently as æsthetic, as were the billowing echoes of the King's anthem. In practice these various states may, of course, cross and alternate and present themselves in various degrees to a single pair of ears in the course of a few minutes; but they will be eminently useful to bear in mind as separate types.

And now for a page I must ask the reader to descend with me to the lowest nadir of truth and dulness that I have in store for him. We cannot advance a step farther without a clear notion of what the coherence I have mentioned really consists in; a clear notion, that is to say, of the fundamental principle of melodic formation. This requires for its comprehension no musical proficiency beyond the power of realising a simple tune; none the less do accomplished musicians, every one of whose melodic intuitions depends on its truth, go through life either denying or ignoring it. It will look, moreover, at once so innocent and so abstract, that I search in vain for some mode of statement that shall force to the front its enormous practical importance. Perhaps the best way will be to anticipate by just mentioning that, while it is exemplified in at least 99 per cent, of

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the bars written by such composers as Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Brahms, the proportion of Wagner's bars which do not set it at defiance could scarcely, on the most liberal estimate, be put at over a half. Recalling, then, the general fact already noticed, that every note in every melodic succession has two aspects, a place in time and a place in pitch, we may develop it as follows: every specimen of developed melody is the resultant of *one particular set* of related time-lengths (called the rhythm), and *one particular set* of related points in pitch (which has no separate name), each of these formative factors being at every point indispensable to the other. It follows that alterations in the time-relations—the change of a crotchet into a minim here or into a quaver there, or the spreading of one bar into two or condensing of two bars into one—are bound to be as fatal to any particular form as alterations of the points in pitch, the replacement of *A*s by *B*s, or any other 'false notes'; and if such alterations can be made without the form's sensibly lapsing into incoherence and absurdity, it must be because in its original state it too completely lacked joints and ribs and vertebræ to be capable of dislocation



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—because it had too little sense to begin with to be suddenly converted into nonsense.

This, then, is the accurate expansion of the vaguely recognised fact that time and pitch both enter somehow into Music. It may be otherwise expressed by saying that melody is perceived *in two dimensions*, which, while distinct in themselves, agree in being each accurately measured, and are then as fused in their effect as height and breadth in a visible object; and time being one of the dimensions, its measurements are not a means of supporting or defining the melody, but with the coincident pitch-measurements *are* the melody. That this principle presents some difficulty, I infer from having found it often explicitly, and still oftener implicitly, disavowed, and hardly once explicitly affirmed and applied; the recognition of it being, none the less, to a true conception of melody much what the recognition of two blades and of their mutual effect is to a true conception of scissors.[1]

[1] I have space only for one or two short instances of its denial. The assertion by an excellent musician, in one popular manual, that a melody 'is not expressive of formal beauty'; and in another, that rhythm is 'supplementary,' but 'will heighten the beauty of a melody'; the belauded aspiration for a time when the 'tyranny of measure' shall escape notice, and music so 'attain self-conscious-

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By true *conception* I of course do not mean true *appreciation*. Thank heaven, no appreciation of terms, no following of propositions, however elementary, is needed for that. No word that I or any one else can use will ever reveal or even modify to any human being the essential impression for which his own ears are the sole channel, save now and again, it may be, by the indirect process of getting him to direct his ears in this or that direction. By conception, I mean a purely external and logical, not an inward and artistic, comprehension of the phenomena. The dry facts

ness'; the Wagnerian description of rhythm as 'an intruder in the realm of absolute music'; even the misapplied phrase 'time and tune'; may stand for innumerable cases showing how constantly rhythm is regarded as a mere adjunct or casual support, not as a constituent, of melody. I need hardly warn the reader against confusing rhythm, which is purely a matter of time-*relations*, with *pace*; or against imagining that the strictness of these relations precludes a certain amount of elasticity in the way of hurryings and retardations, in which the sense of the true relations is completely preserved.

To make the above account complete, one further fact is needed. Time and pitch, we have seen, equally admit of accurate measurement. But while the pitch-series of a melody, we found, is made up of items of a particular *scale* with gaps or intervals between the steps, in the time-series, from the very nature of time, such gaps can never occur. That is to say, time is passing, and is felt as passing, *between* the moments when the successive notes are attacked; whence it is easy to see that measured items of the time-series may pass *in silence*, without being occupied by any item of the pitch-series—such silent time-items being called *rests*.



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which I have set forth, exemplified as they are equally in the half-automatic enjoyment of the street-boy and the wrapt appreciation of the connoisseur, have the same relation to the pleasurable experience as physiological knowledge has to the exhilarating sense of vigorous life. But the bearings of physiological knowledge on life have their importance; for life brings occasions which demand more than the mere power to enjoy—to wit, some reasoned knowledge of that on which the power depends, of the conditions of health and disease, of the foods that nourish and the foods that cloy. And the world-life of Music is rife in occasions when its public, for want of some slight inquiry, accept what they enjoy little for what they might enjoy much, and ride anchorless at the mercy of puffers and experts; not realising the conditions of what has most truly delighted them, nor separating it from much that they have endured in patience or believed in vicariously, nor standing on their right, as the majority of those for whom Music exists, to rely on the verdict of their own ears.

But to return to our melody. The objective conditions above stated, the extreme definiteness of formation necessary to coherent melodic motive,

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would naturally lead us to expect that the phenomena as appreciated by the hearer would present a similar character. Experience abundantly justifies the expectation. There never can be any doubt about melody (by this word I mean to include a passage of any length which possesses organic unity) once known and loved. It may not be grasped on a first, or a second, or even a third hearing; ears vary immensely in their tether—in the length and elaborateness of the passages they can bind into organic series. But once so grasped, such a series, whether four bars long or forty, is as much itself and nothing else as a familiar face or a familiar road; and can often indeed be recalled by average musical capacity with an absolute precision, unequalled in any mental picture of visible objects that the most gifted observer could summon up. However ineffable and mysterious be the delight, considered apart from its object—from the individual succession of notes which produces it—there is still no subjective vagueness or uncertainty about it. In the very act of being produced, it is fused and one with an impression as definite and objective as that of the Parthenon; it presents itself as an indescribable glorying in that particular motive as being just what it is.

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Here, then, we have a double mode of testing how far any music, presented to us as melodic, possesses the definiteness of true organic form.[1] We may either make alterations in its structure (by altering some of the time-relations as suggested above), and so detect how far it has genuine structure enough to be capable of sensibly falling to pieces; or, surrendering ourselves to its influence, we may note the degree of possessingness and permanence in the artistic impression. It must not be supposed that these tests will equally serve to distinguish good from bad, or enjoyable from unenjoyable music. Even the second one, though almost, is not quite infallible for this purpose; for though dull strains are certainly not as a rule vividly or accurately realised and recalled, at any rate in lengths of any considerable extent, yet it is a familiar experience to be haunted by phrases which are felt as positively wearisome and distressing. And the former test alone would be quite inadequate; for just as a plain face may

[1] Any music figured on music-paper puts in a visible claim to have true artistic formation. It is therefore worth remarking that in pronouncing much of it formless (as the application of our tests will oblige us to do), we are using the word as we should use it of some clumsy clod of earth or random scrawl of lines, not meaning that such objects have not some sort of figure in space, but that the shapes are shape*less*—are inartistic, fortuitous, and unarresting.

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possess as definite features, related to each other in as definite ways, as a beautiful one, so trivial and unimpressive musical forms may present as much definiteness of structure as refined and impressive ones. But this structural test is of the utmost practical importance as marking the conditions inside which it is possible, and outside which it is impossible, that beauty of a permanently arresting and vital sort should exist; much as a spine and ribs are indispensable elements, though not guarantees, of a beautiful human figure. The reason why no one would think of dwelling on these conditions of human beauty, is that they are so obvious and universal; there are no vague things professing to be human figures in which such features are absent or doubtfully present. We shall see, if we now pass on to the vague side of Music, how differently the case stands with its abstract and ever new combinations.

We have already remarked the existence in Music of a vagueness distinct from incoherence or mere negation of form, and having *positive* æsthetic value; and the very words suggest its connection with the *positive* elements of Music which are other than form, viz. material and colour—that is to say, musical sounds considered in respect of their

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immediate sensuous qualities of mass and tone, not of their melodic and harmonic combinations. Pursuing this connection, we find in the first place the peculiarities of musical tone, which fit it for artistic combination, intensifying instead of destroying certain qualities of wide occurrence in the domain of sound in general. No region of impression approaches sound in the sort of effect of which we find it hard to say how far it is purely nervous, and how far penetrated by genuine though most vague imaginative qualities. Even our start at a sudden loud sound seems possibly connected with some dim momentary suggestion of external power, which has its roots possibly in catastrophes of remotest ages; while the longer roll of thunder or the near roar of a cataract gives time for the startled feeling to soften into wonder and awe. We look in vain for a parallel to this in any simple but unusual stimulation even of the æsthetic sense of sight, as *e.g.* if we look at the sun when just bearably bright. So again it is hard to say how far further intuitions of gentle continuance and spiritual calm do not mingle in the soothing effect produced on the nerves by the monotony of flowing water, or the undistinguished murmurs of summer woods. All such emotional swayings are producible in a pecu-

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liar degree by sudden bursts, rolling volumes, or peaceful continuances of music, which conveys to the hearer, whether owing to his or its deficiency, no impression of definite and recognisable form. Not only does its marked colour-quality increase the nervous effect as compared with the more neutral sounds of winds and waters, but a musical piece by its frequent changes of pace and loudness has special opportunity for condensing, and, by contrast, intensifying the solemn, the exciting, and the soothing elements. Still more important is the less direct effect of continuous sound, in so arousing and attuning the general mental faculties that they readily direct themselves along any favourite channels of thought and fancy—an effect producible to some extent even by the monotonous roll of a railway-carriage. And here again musical sound, owing to its more possessing influence on the nervous organisation, assumes a special power of quickening and easing the independent movements of the brain; a familiar instance being the use of Music in assisting public devotions.

And now, beyond this superiority in its degree of effect, a distinction must be drawn which marks off the material of Music, not only from all natural sounds, but from the material of all other

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arts. By the slow supervention of form upon the bare material of possible tones, material *of a more formed sort*, but still for artistic purposes simply material, has been stored up. Our scale itself is an instance. The selection of its constituent tones was a tentative and gradual formative process, the different intervals being tried and unconsciously tested in all sorts of forms; but once fixed, its notes and intervals are there as material for any one to use, while its timeless neutrality would prevent any one calling the scale itself a form. So again by the special frequency of particular bits of note-linking, especially in chord-formation and obvious chord-progressions, elements are stored up which are truly material, in the sense that they have themselves scarcely a vestige of æsthetic significance, and are common fragments, capable, like fragments of masonry, of entering into all sorts of forms. And all this has important bearings on the effect of successions of coloured sound on ears which detect therein little or nothing of organic motive. Such ears may still receive far more than the mere sense of shifting colour. No ears probably are so perfectly unmusical as to be quite unaffected by having perforce lived among the music of the modern scale- and chord-system; in

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other words, to detect no difference if Arabian intervals were made prominent and all the harmonies purposely disarranged. But for some dim perception of natural variety and natural consecutiveness, the finest colour would soon become insupportable to the most tolerant ear, as if an Asiatic scale, or the alternate chords of B and C, were continued for an hour on the mellowest organ in the world. It is, in fact, the perception of such amount of formed movement as cannot but exist even in the most formless music of an advanced epoch, that counterbalances the wearying effect on the nerves of anything so aggressive as musical *timbre*. We can allow a gurgling stream to sound in our ears for a whole afternoon; but not even a Farinelli could reconcile us to a single distinct note for a couple of minutes.

Such, in briefest outline, is the case for the value of musical vagueness: and in the genuineness of that value—paradox number five—lies the greatest danger to the art. There are many to whom the heightening of the general plane of emotion, the steeping of the mind in an atmosphere where it soars with unwonted ease on familiar tracks, now soothed into religious calm, now stirred into mundane agitation, and, above all,

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those dim translations of imaginative aspects of existence, heard in the hush and fury, the crises and contrasts, the onsets and reluctations, of musical movement—there are many, I say, to whom all this seems of such singular and magical virtue, that they are surprised or resentful at the idea that the true magic of Music must be sought elsewhere. When one speaks of there being something more, they forget that they realise something more every time their ears welcome a familiar melodic phrase, and that that is all one means. Yet surely the idea may be put with irresistible force in two ways.

First—to look at the matter from outside—if the formed beauty of the statues in the Laurentine Chapel must be esteemed a higher product than the fairest wall of cliff or sun-bathed boulder in the mountains of Carrara, must it not equally be granted that the part in music which it took a Handel or a Beethoven to produce, the particular combinations which their intuition discovered and their patient toil wrought out, has superior artistic significance to the part which, given an adequate instrument, requires no more inventive modelling than most tolerable organists can supply at a moment's notice? This analogy is not at all impugned by the fact that musical material, even in its most

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inventionless combinations, may have more emotional quality than marble. As long as it is in the force or beauty of the mere sound, and not of its particular formation, that a hearer finds the substance of his impression, it is clearly not inventive genius that is impressing him.

And next—to look at the matter from inside—must not the shapes which take entire and individual possession of the mind, which can be suggested to it again through a piano or some quite inferior sound-medium, nay, can even so dispense with their coloured investiture as to recur again and again to the memory at times of silence and solitude, or amid the ordinary bustle of life—to one perhaps in their full development, to another in fragmentary germ, but always as familiar friends—must not these be reckoned a more priceless possession for our race than any vague kaleidoscopic glories, than all the shifting subjective phantasmagoria, evocable for a passing hour, at particular places and under exceptional conditions, through the agency of musical mass and colour? Do not all those matchless motives that satisfy Wagner's test of pure worthlessness by haunting our memories 'we know not why'—does not a simple *Volkslied*, or a noble symphonic 'subject,' indepen-

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dent of time and place, safely enthroned in the shrines of thousands of individual hearts—live a life unknown to that glorious or glittering throng of sounds which, in cathedral or theatre, may bathe the ear with solemn waves or sparkling spray, and leave behind them as little as the floating clouds of incense or the glamour of the lime-lights? And even for the less noteworthy strains, which in many works form the tracts between such more vivid foci, is not at least the fact of being gladly greeted and actively recognised as themselves and nothing else an undeniable badge of distinction? I am obliged here to put the contrast strongly. I cannot write a chapter of saving clauses, and I have already said that these typical characters of Music are rarely completely separated. Fragments of real form may exist in a generally formless work; or may emerge from the general mass and blaze of sound, which may at first overpower the distinguishing faculty even of a trained and attentive ear. But while the ears whose instinct is to seek will refuse to be put off, or to recognise as æsthetically vague what simply eludes their grasp, the common habit of single hearings—of treating music (often, alas! deservedly) as a sort of *douche* for the ear, not meant to stick or sink in—

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accustoms many to be quite content with vagueness; and then, I repeat, its real value becomes a snare. For, indeed, it is this which has enabled Wagner to represent as an *advance* the lapse into a sort of shifting coloured suggestiveness, bound to no independent virtue, of what is pre-eminently an art of form—the art whose great characteristic triumphs (including, of course, his own) are won by the extraordinary individuality of the shapes which it can present.

Here, then, is the crucial question for every musical presentation to which the word *fine* could be in any sense applied. Is it fine music, or is it only fine noise? or, since it may be each in turn within the space of half a minute, during how many minutes altogether is it the one or the other? Has what is heard the stuff to be the permanent bread and wine of artistic life for tens of thousands; or is it just an innocuous whiff of opium for those who crave some vaguely exciting background either for their own fancies, or for public solemnities, or for dramatic performances? If the former, then, whether its name be the *Old Hundredth* or the *Eroica* symphony, its strength and permanence depend on its vertebrate structure, on organic interdependence of bars and phrases and fulness

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of closely-knit motive. If the latter, then, whether its sonorities roll about harmlessly for a few minutes, like the chord-progressions with which an organist drowns the tuning of an orchestra, or assault the ear for as many hours with the rarest sound-colour that the world affords, between the lucid intervals of the *Rheingold* or the *Götterdämmerung*, its emptiness and transience depend on its *in*vertebrate structure, on inorganic dispersion of bars and phrases and lack of closely-knit motive. I wish to keep clear of music-type and technicalities, and will only therefore suggest to the musical reader to spend half an hour in applying my first test to some specimens of Wagner's 'melodic' declamation. Avoiding the *Meistersinger* and some favoured acts elsewhere, and skipping any passages where the true ideal of impressive orchestral motive is attained, or even (to be generous) where the witty compilers of the *Nibelung* motive-book could with much certainty detect their prey, let him count the pages where the casual halving or doubling of the time-values of a fair sprinkling of the notes, or the spreading here and there of one bar into two, produces a real rebellion of the ear against the change, in the sense that something cogently right is found to be

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made helplessly wrong. I think that even devotees may be thus surprised at the patience they have been unwittingly displaying; for it scarcely needs proof that shapes which cannot be dislocated *out* of shape can have neither strength, nor beauty, nor (in any vital sense) expression. One has the less scruple in pressing this test for Wagner's *practice*, seeing that in his *theory*, through many pages of discussion on fine-drawn and unreal relations of melodic to verbal rhythm, the recognition of the fundamental relation of rhythm to melody—resting on the fundamental principle of regular nervous stimulation—is conspicuous by its absence. Yet the quality which Wagner has dimly perceived to be common to Beethoven's symphonies and to the simplest dance-tune, and which, indeed, constitutes the 'tyranny' that musical form is to advance by throwing off, is of course no other than this. One wonders whether, according to the same theory of evolution, there is a good time coming for the human form in which the flesh will throw off the tyranny of the bones.

I cannot here pursue the criticism of Wagner into detail, or re-examine in its historical and psychological aspects his strange confusion of the presentative forms or ἰδέαι which Music finds in



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herself, and in which she expresses herself, with the representative ideas which Poetry draws from the world and which express her version of the world; his singular affiliation of an art which, starting in physical impulses of the remotest past, has never lost its exceptionally direct relation to the organism, and so appeals to the most prosaic of mankind, on that other art of intellectual birth and quicker growth with which Music long formed unequal, and is still always willing to form equal alliances[1]—in a word, the confusion of possible

[1] One aspect of this subject, however, is so intimately concerned with our present distinction of the vague and the definite, that I cannot quite omit it. An extremely common error recognises that distinction in the relation of music to the words to which it is 'set.' Wagner asserts as self-evident that the normal condition of the alliance is for the words to be definite (his own are often painfully so), and for the music to make up for its lack of concrete meaning and greater vagueness by the more intense emotional colouring with which it can invest the verbal sentiment. Now whether we call it ethically vague or æsthetically indescribable—it is often both—the emotional colouring, to be vivid and permanent, must depend, as we have seen, on *definite* musical impression. 'What any music means for me,' said Mendelssohn in relation to song, 'is not something too indefinite for words, but too definite'—a sentence which ought to be inscribed in letters of gold over the door of every composer's workroom. That the words *can* be similarly definite and individual, in the sense of making satisfactory pieces on their own account, Heine and Mr. W. S. Gilbert in their different styles would alone suffice to prove. But special suitability of first-rate verse for musical setting is extremely rare: it is fortunate therefore that individual and independent merit in the words is in no way a necessity, as it is

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union of effect with actual unity of substance. I have tried elsewhere to confute this alleged identity in source and essence of musical with poetical production; on the strength of which words, even when of the nature of formal heraldic proclamations or philosophical disquisitions, can, it seems, be 'expressed' by spattering them with random flakes of vocal intervals thrown off from a chopping sea of restless orchestration. It is rather with practice that I would now deal in the light of the above conceptions; and I take Wagner as representative of the crisis through which Music is now passing, not because he has theorised, but because in his actual productions the forces of good and evil are so markedly combined. Side by side on his pages stand the types of the two forces, of revelation and negation, of life and decay, known for what they are only by the ear

in the music. A most elementary sort of poetry, such as we might pass without a second thought in a collection, will supply sentiments and images which become charged with whole worlds of romance, when the musical motive has dominated and blended their stray suggestions into the unity of its own coherent individuality. In the failure to see this clearly lies a very main assistance to Wagner's theory and practice of 'expressing' poetical ideas and emotions by note-phrases lacking any coherent individuality, and throwing the onus of coherence on the words, while he still reaps the benefit of nobody's judging the words as if they were meant for independent realisation.



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which recognises the greatness and the urgency of its own legitimate claims—nobly-formed tune and artfully-coloured incoherence, natural impressiveness and tortured pseudo-expressiveness, deserts of weariness and oases of delight. And it must be the aim of all who perceive this to get the facts recognised for what they are; not to allow one limb of our paradoxes to be realised (as it often is) without the other; not to let it be supposed that because melodic forms are abstract they are arbitrary, or can become a force in the world independently of deep-seated conditions, as certain, if as few, as the mechanical conditions of Architecture; nor that because the vast development of the art is new, the essential rhythmic condition is not old, older than our race; nor that because Music can present complexities which task experts, it can cease to find both its basis and its crown in clearly-defined and clearly-realised motives; nor that because it is vague and of all things most transient when we do not grasp it, it is not definite and of all things most permanent when we do.

Nor must the juxtaposition of right and wrong in Wagner's particular productions blind us to the fact that it is the wrong that almost exclusively prevails in his influence on production in general.

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All our admiration of him as a great creator must not disguise the danger of lauding him as a 'great innovator' or a 'daring reformer.' As a creator, he has perforce done what all other great creators have done, set his exploring faculty along the distinct paths of rhythmic impulse; along which path he has, like them, found sound-forms gathering into shape—not indeed crowding on him as on the supreme masters, but still revealing themselves to him, and through him to the world, in mastering force and beauty. As an innovator, owing partly to his lack of continuous creative power and partly to his unconsciousness of that lack, he has been before everything the apostle of disintegration, the facile tempter of others off the paths of firm and formed motive into the wastes of shifting and shiftless sonority. Such is the 'reformatory' tendency of a theory which would divert musical invention from the real to the unreal—from the patient pursuit, in the only possible place and by the only possible faculty, of such combinations as alone can either dignify Music or transfigure their non-musical concomitants, to the extrication of 'expressive' notes from their supposed lurking-place in the verbal details of more or less questionable 'poetry.' Those very achievements

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which are the chief positive result of Wagner's quarrel with his predecessors, and which he has shown to have capabilities of true dramatic service —the relaxation of the stereotyped sections of solo and concerted piece, and the throwing of the weight of the music into the orchestra—have proved a snare. As regards the part assigned to the orchestra, if its successful employment points to a really valuable field of operatic development, Wagner has none the less taught us what new and unique chances it affords for successful imposition. And as regards the stereotyped barriers, they might conceivably have been broken through in serious Opera —as Beethoven broke through the conventional outline of paragraphs in chamber-music and symphony—without relaxing an iota of the principle of genuinely organic movement in the successive sentences of which the series must perforce consist, had Wagner been a Beethoven, or even had his own inventive springs been more abundant. But as, on the one hand, the weakness of Italian Opera lay, not in the barriers, but in the poorness of the stuff they enclosed, so, on the other, the strength of Beethoven lay, not in the bursting of the barriers, but in the splendour of the stuff with which he overflowed them. This burster of barriers is, in

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point of fact, the most organic and the most 'inevitable' composer that ever lived—the composer whose every sentence and paragraph comes to seem the most necessary in its place, and in whom therefore the root-principle of musical form, *strict interdependence of parts*, reaches its furthest development. But this by the way. It is not with these larger developments, but with the sentences and paragraphs themselves, made up of notes and note-groups, that we are now concerned. And here the principle admits of no relaxation. Some of the most beautiful long compositions in the world—by Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Schumann—are comparatively loose in the larger aspects of structure—*i.e.* they do not produce the Beethoven sense of inevitableness in the sequence of paragraphs; but no musical sentence has ever profoundly impressed human ears without inevitableness in the sequence of notes and note-groups. The question is not of this or that arrangement of periods, of this or that mode of punctuation and transition—points on which an opera-writer may fairly claim the utmost liberty—but of a certain continuity of musical interest during the minutes (not necessarily continuous) that music is going on. To this that very liberty is a constant danger; yet to this no

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composer on whom Beethoven's mantle has at all fallen 'so as to hurt' can presume to sit loose.

But the evil influence is in no way confined to Opera. In all directions we find the same garish impatient fragmentariness; the same tendency to do what is easy and wrong, instead of what is difficult and right. No writer can catch from Wagner or any one else the heaven-sent gift of tune: only too easy to catch is the notion that colour and noise will do as well, with perhaps a printed programme whereby the hearer's humble instinct to interrogate his ears may be swamped in the sublime faith that he is listening to a 'poem.' Not without instructive irony is the very fact that it was in Wagner's bitter opponent, Berlioz, that this particular development of modern music found its protagonist, and in Wagner on the other hand a pretty severe critic; for, lying far deeper than his criticisms of it, its fundamental principle—that vital music can be tapped from some other than a distinctively musical source, and by something else than the direct and undeviating exercise of distinctively musical invention—will assuredly never own for its chief prophet any other than himself. And nowhere else in the domain of Art can the confusion be so utter, or the contagion of

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error in high places so rapidly disastrous, simply because no other art has the power of sinking into an incoherence at all comparable to that of Music. Even critics who discern the approaching collapse of classical painting in the wastes of muscle and huddled foreshortenings dispersed over Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment*, still perceive that the members at any rate combine into human shapes, in strongly conceived if uncomfortable attitudes, and do not expect to find the canvas of the next generation of painters covered with mere stray arms and legs. But in Music, let the composer give up the search for individual sound-shapes, for series of notes arresting as *forms*, and not for being shrieked by piccolos or blared by trumpets—and the collapse is total. If nothing but rayless ingenuity were expended on this sort of work, one might shrug one's shoulders ; but it is impossible to forget that not Berlioz only, but men like Rubinstein, and Raff, and even perhaps Liszt, were born with a spark of the divine fire, which has enabled more than one of them to produce bits of exquisite work, sometimes complete on a small scale, sometimes shed in fragments over a larger area ; and which might have given them too a place among the immortals, had it but been allied with the moral attri-

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bute which, quite as much as genius, has seemed to mark out Brahms as of the lineage of Beethoven—the habit of stern and patient self-criticism. As things are, it is not too much to say that there is more of the genuine pleasure-giving quality in many a naïve page of native growth than might be found in a cart-load of foreign importations.

I should hardly, however, have dignified with the name of crisis the fact that a certain number of composers have fallen slaves to their instruments and orchestras, and produce scores full of joyless work. Were that all, one might find compensation in the reaction, when clever musicians sit down and charm a large company by jodelling, to two chords, strains compared with which *Mandolinata* is profound—delightfully recalling Punch's delightful joke about the preciousness of 'Little Bo-peep.' The serious fact is rather that the joyless music is getting *répandu*, and that audiences seem more and more ready to mistake for the best that the art can give them the sort of mechanical amusement which they derive from its vagaries. Such blunting and misdirection of the popular instincts is fatal, not perhaps so much to the genuine enjoyment when it comes, but to the essential habit of seeking for it in repeated hearings, and giving to all music that can

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truly move us the same chance of sinking deep into our love and memory as we give, without thinking about it, to some favourite domestic piece, or to some cherished specimen of pictorial or poetic art.

And this brings me to a comforting reflection. Hoping as I do, from signs too numerous even to mention here, that in the great future of Music in England the main fact will be the very opposite of listening to superfine orchestras, namely, the universally increased rendering of music by the people themselves, I am able to regard the present unhealthy condition, depressing though it be, as still very possibly transient and local. It is naturally in London that the unhealthy symptoms are most prominent. One easily sees how the fact of expensive performance is a peculiarly misleading sort of *imprimatur*; the trustful hearer is slow to believe that a work at which sixty admirable instrumentalists have been perspiring for an hour (to say nothing of rehearsals) is the musical analogue, say, of Pollok's *Course of Time*. But in the first place, increased knowledge will bring confidence to many a doubting judgment; and in the second place, these musical abortions luckily make immense demands on their performers, and in that way are limited to rare places and occasions. On

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such our art, in its great popular character, can never depend. Of the legion of Wagner's fallacies, the supposition that the life of a people's music can or ought to emanate from special performances for an *élite* few at some favoured centre, is the grossest insult both to music and people, to say nothing of common sense. One might with more reason represent the life of poetry in England as consisting in sending up delegates to the Lyceum. The dignity of an Avatar will never compensate the 'heavenly maid' for this blasphemy against what is divinest in her; and that a man of Wagner's sincerity should so have lost the habit of genial and sympathetic observation as explicitly to deny the musical art-life of his own people, and to describe, *e.g.*, the abundant wells of daily delight which Schumann opened up to them and to us as 'complete uuproductiveness in Art,' is a really ludicrous Nemesis on his own constant defiance of the rhythmic and tonal conditions of great popular music. But in England, at any rate, the art numbers its centres by thousands; and if its life is to give delight, and the delight is measured by degree and permanence, it is surely a truism to say that the practice-room in which a choral society becomes familiar with the masterpieces of Handel

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and Mendelssohn, or the piano through which a household makes friends for life with Beethoven and Schumann, is more of a centre of musical life, and brings forth a hundred times more of it hour by hour, than the most elaborate presentations of work like Liszt's (anything but) *Divine Comedy*, or Rubinstein's *Paradise* (very decidedly) *Lost*, or the nightmare movements of the *Harold* and *Lenore* symphonies—not to mention a good many hundreds out of the thousand minutes occupied by Wagner's tetralogy—from which not one per cent. of the audience carry away a vestige even of the very sparse delight that they may have received.

But though, as long as the popular taste develops, the present prevalence of the phenomena here discussed might appear hardly to constitute a crisis in the history of the art, there is a deeper sense in which it may be the sign of one. On a broad view of musical life in its public and private aspects, it can hardly be denied that we are getting more and more used to the paucity of strains at once perspicuous and magnificent in contemporary production, and turning more and more instinctively to the past for our greatest music. What does this portend? Is there something in it beyond the mere crowding out of untried work by what is well estab-

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lished in public favour—a crowding out which is to some extent inevitable in an art each of whose presentations must exclusively occupy a very appreciable space of time? We have among us writers of indisputable genius and enthusiasm, and the outer conditions of great public receptivity and an immense spread of musical knowledge are in their favour. Are the inner conditions equally favourable to true greatness and permanence in their work? or are they doomed by the very atmosphere into which they were born to be a generation of Epigoni? The nature and history of Music both suggest that in this art the exceptional is what is to be expected; as regards creative originality, is it to be an exceptionally long meridian or an exceptionally rapid decline? Does the multitude of known directions in which the musical faculty of the inventive few, as well as of the uninventive many, has been led from childhood, leave unimpaired the aptitude for striking out into new directions, which, though new, shall have the power of drawing other ears into them with glad compulsion? Does the inevitable and lifelong possession of brain and heart by the crowd of haunting shapes which represent the inventive achievements of the last few generations, allow the old spring and scope for

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spontaneous imaginings? Is there really a danger that the present progress of Music, where it is not towards chaos, is towards the ingenuity and complexity which would reduce it to the refined amusement of a small specially-gifted minority? Our third paradox taught us that comparatively short motives of arresting interest are necessary to great works: will they cease? Our second paradox taught us that the note-material of our music is of modern development, and it has been assiduously racked and re-racked for combinations: will it hold out? *Volkslieder* like those of the past do not seem now to blossom up: can we look for an eternity of striking 'subjects' in concert-music or Opera?

I have not space to attempt a reply, even were a definite reply possible; but perhaps, as regards the public at large, we may find some solace in a reference to our first paradox. In Music, if anywhere, we may expect vitality in what for a generation and upwards have been lived on as masterpieces. For not only cannot musical structures crumble like earthly temples, but the very abstraction from outer regions of idea and sentiment which gives them their wide appeal, sets them out of danger from the changes and chances of political, religious, and social life.

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## *A PERMANENT BAND FOR THE EAST-END.*

IN one of his admirable articles on social reform, the Rev. S. A. Barnett struck a true note in pointing out that the plain social duty of those whose lives are sheltered and prosperous to those whose lives are struggling and forlorn is the supply of what he boldly called *luxuries*. In the main it is possible, and if possible expedient, that the life of individuals and families should be *maintained* by their own exertions. But that it should be *made worth living* by their own exertions, is often wholly impossible; seeing that the minutes and hours of which it is forced to consist have nothing worth living about them, and have no tendency to beget other minutes and hours better or brighter than themselves. Here, then, direct assistance gets its fair and boundless field. But the field is made up of two very distinct portions —the one concerned with the means of cleanliness, decency, and self-respect, the other with more

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positive pleasures; and just because the importance of the former portion so much absorbs the thoughts and hopes of reformers, and the more positive enjoyments are regarded as an extra, is a reminder occasionally needed that to be clean, decent, and self-respecting is by no means to live a life worth living. For most lives, excitement is not an extra but an essential—more truly a condition of health than even personal cleanliness. And of all charitable duties, the provision of excitement in its higher forms is in one sense the *plainest*; seeing that while any other sort of direct giving is fraught with doubts and dangers, and needs to be cautiously planned indeed if it is to avoid the evil of encouraging thriftlessness and weakening self-reliance, this particular sort admits of neither doubt nor danger, and every atom of the gift represents so much sheer gain, without the possibility of drawback.

The reason why this view, which might be widely agreed to in theory, is not more boldly acted on, is, I believe, a lurking doubt as to the capacity for the higher enjoyments of persons whom fate has first condemned and then adapted to ugly and sordid conditions. It is thought that some amount of elevation in mind and habits



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must be produced by the slower machinery of board-schools, temperance-movements, and improved dwellings, before these enjoyments can have their chance, or at any rate before they can be distributed broadcast. Taking men in the mass, comfort, it is thought, must come before beauty; fairly civilised material conditions before the appreciation of art. Now, if it is the art of Shakespeare and of Tennyson that is meant, I fear I must entirely agree; if it is the art of Turner and of Watts, I must in great part agree; if it is the art of Handel and of Strauss, I cannot agree in the very least. That it should happen, by a divine chance, that one great art exists which is independent both of the visible world and of the life led in it, is just one of those pregnant facts whose moral we overlook because they are so near us—the moral here being that the art in question has the perpetual power of flourishing among the meanest surroundings, and of mingling its current with the most prosaic lives. And what is this but to say that it is the *peculiar* art for modern industrial communities, and the *unique* means for fighting the public-houses? To be a little more precise, I am persuaded, after long and careful observation, of the axiomatic truth of the

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three following statements:—That the appreciation of the best and most refined music requires neither goodness nor refinement, though indirectly it may promote both; that it does not even require education, except such education as is involved in the very act of hearing; and that in respect not of *all* but of *much* good music (which on this very account we may claim to be the best [1]), the fullest faculty of this appreciation is inborn in a large number—and a considerable degree of it in a large majority—of the inhabitants of this country; many of whom, however, go perforce from the cradle to the grave without the chance of discovering its existence, and so without the chance of demanding its exercise as their birthright. I

[1] The common idea that there is a sort of incompatibility between *good* music and *popular* music (or *populace* music) depends on the undoubted fact that music exists which cannot be denied to be good, but which can only in the millennium become popular. But if there is one thing that I would assert with more confidence than another, it is this: that though you may easily give a rough English audience music too *difficult* for them, you can never give them music too *good* for them. I would not shrink from an extreme test. Take the roughest audience, and try them with the most vulgar, bouncing, and obtrusively 'popular' composition, and then with some perfectly quiet piece of divine tune—for instance, Braham's *Death of Nelson*, and Handel's *Love in Her Eyes*—each to be sung as well as possible. It is just possible that the former might get most applause on the first hearing; if it continued to do so on the third, I would be content never to say a word more about popular music.



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am inclined to believe that the faculty is most instinctive and universal *below* the classes of educated and comfortable people, but cannot state this with positiveness. Of the other statements, I have attempted elsewhere to give the reasons and the proofs; I can here only dwell on the kind of action which they demand if they even distantly approach the truth.

That action can be nothing less than the establishment of daily music, of a sort that thousands can hear, wherever it is certain that thousands will come and hear it; and to begin with, in the East-End of London. I should be the last to undervalue the admirable work done by the various Societies which give regular concerts and entertainments in poor districts, or the still more admirable work of those who are starting and supervising local classes for musical instruction. It is to this latter movement—the thin end of a mighty wedge—rather than to any National Training School, that we must look, as time goes on, for a revelation of the musical possibilities of our nation. But meanwhile very much more than this is wanted. These dispersed efforts need some huge palpable musical fact for a setting; some constant exhibition of the art, such as may arrest the atten-

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tion of multitudes who would never find their way to a 'People's Entertainment' or a 'Ballad Concert,' still less to a choral practice. A large band playing good music daily or rather nightly throughout the year, in a large covered space, is the least that I would advocate.

The first objection to such a scheme will perhaps be that, in view of the other schemes already launched, it is unnecessary. I wish therefore to make it clear that the institution of a large permanent band in the East of London is a wholly different project, and would have a wholly different aim, from those other schemes. For the work which amateurs are doing there will always be ample scope; but concerts of the kind that they supply can never meet the primary want that I have in view. I have never pretended that, because people live at the East-End, their hearts and understandings are necessarily at the mercy of ballads; still less that a large proportion of them will care to spend their evenings in sitting quietly, listening to high-class chamber music. To expect that would indeed be quixotic. Such hours of refined and unsensational æstheticism are not as yet for the masses, whether of the rich or of the poor. The printed reports of these meetings—how the

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audiences are apt to be scanty and require to be amused, and how it will be necessary to educate them up to the class of music that is desired for them[1]—sufficiently indicate that the familiar demons of ugliness, squalor, and discontent have too deep a hold on average East-End life to be exorcised by the tinkle of a piano or the tones of amateur vocalists, even though Beethoven speak through the one and Schubert through the other. All honour to the benevolent entertainers who cast their bread upon the waters; the swans will come and eat it, and the geese may learn to follow. But meanwhile what is required is something stronger and more stimulating—something that the people may feel in the spine and at the roots of the hair, as well as in the ears. A child who has seen fifty other London churches with indifference will feel a thrill of awe on entering St. Paul's. In matters of art our city populations are as children; and I want this great centre of performance to be a sort of musical St. Paul's—dominant and exceptional, with an atmosphere of its own, and able to infuse a spice of the awful even into a Strauss waltz.

[1] See a letter of Mrs. Ernest Hart, the energetic Secretary of the Popular Ballad Concert Committee, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for Nov. 20, 1884.

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But then sound, to be awful and to get at the spine, needs ample appliances—needs to be nourished in its depths by double-basses, and trumpeted forth in its heights by brass; and the sinews of trumpeters and double-bass players are—money. Work like that is a complicated craft; it must be depended on like machinery. It is not amateur work, any more than the building of St. Paul's was. And in the richest city of the world, where the arts of the eye are so sumptuously housed, Music may surely claim one spot where her invisible temple shall be reared in truly imposing style—'never built at all, and therefore built for ever'—daily new-created in our midst, and free as national property for any who will to enter.

I would not be misunderstood. No one has spoken more strenuously than I in contempt of the mere sonorous investiture of Music, which is as much at the service of the flimsiest phrase-mongering as of the loftiest invention. It is the growing tendency to mere restless sonority which I hold to be the febrile symptom, the sure sign of decay, in recent production. But to catch and command rude ears, you must give them the striking investiture—the bright and massive sound-colours—as a bait, if nothing else. In the absence of special

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education, it is only the specially gifted who will grasp at the essential beauties of music where, as in chamber compositions played in a large concert room, there is a lack of full sensuous quality. For the average hearer you must supply that quality, only taking care that the sensuous sonority is the embodiment of something worth embodying. The band itself, with its wealth of sound-power, is a mere condition or instrument; the aim lies beyond. No amount of sonorous beauty will endow with the power to grip the attention and haunt the memory strains which it took anything less than genius to create. The function of the band is simply to be the mouthpiece of genius—to present, with the force and emphasis that the masses require, the one sort of great ideas that they can intuitively apprehend. Some might say, get the band and then think about the programmes; I say no one who does not see that the programmes are the vital point ought to try to justify the band.

On this vital point I will offer here only two suggestions. One frequent feature of German concerts should be freely adopted, and scores of great melodies, vocal or any other, should be arranged for orchestral presentation—played, for instance, by wind, and accompanied by strings. This is the

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only substitute—and a very good one too—for rare and expensive solo voices. Purism on this and every other head should be thrown to the winds. Let the master be unmistakeably heard; let his forms be made palpable to the ear; their message will be felt in time. And, more important still, the band should take a lesson from the barrel-organs, and repeat the same works again and again. Popular music is familiar music; and familiar music is music that has had its fair chance of sinking in. We do not walk through art-galleries at four miles an hour; we stop and look; and Music must be treated with the same respect. Nothing should be played which has not the stuff in it, when sufficiently heard, to become more or less of a possession—from week's end to week's end not a passage that is not able and worthy to be recognised as a friend; and a considerable number of pieces which reach this degree of excellence, ranging in kind from the C minor Symphony to the *Blue Danube* waltz, from the *Figaro* and *Tannhäuser* overtures to selections from *Dorothy* and *Patience*, should appear in the programme at least fifty times a year. In no other way could a fair chance be afforded to that haunting and recurring power whereby this art can so strangely pervade and

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irradiate common life, and to which every stray scrap of song, every whistling street-boy, bears unconscious witness.

This, then, is my plea for a large scheme. The large scheme would succeed; fifty small ones would fail—fail, I mean, to do the particular work wanted. An ordinary band sent down twice a week to play tuneless jigs and bandmasters' variations after the fashion that passes muster in the prosperous West,[1] would not be a step in the right direc-

[1] I am glad of this opportunity to enter a protest against the astonishing feebleness and joylessness of much of the music played by our superb military bands. One is struck by this whenever one happens to hear a good many of their performances in close proximity, as at the summer evening *fêtes* in the South Kensington grounds (when, however, there was always a sprinkling of good pieces), or in the streets and parks on the Jubilee day. It is the old question of form and colour, substance and investiture, discussed in the preceding Essays—the old fallacy that sonorous tone and fine performance will make any rubbish fit to listen to. Considering the splendid array of overtures, marches, and dance-tunes existing in the world, and either already adapted or immediately adaptable to open-air bands, one can only account for the presentation of pieces which are a mere series of puerile inanities by supposing that the bandmaster either (1) sees no difference between champagne and ditch-water, or (2) imagines that his audiences prefer the latter. Total lack of musical sensibility on his own part would have to be left as incurable, but not so the delusion as to other people. He is out of touch with them, perhaps, when surrounded by his band; and a good deal might be done if he would resign his *bâton* for a few weeks, and devote himself to a study of the audiences. Even stolid English faces are to some extent legible. But I would give

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tion, but a distinct hindrance. But once let the great primary centre be established—once let the people know that a unique sensation is to be had for the walking to it, and that the means for evoking it are theirs in perpetuity—and every allied scheme, every smaller centre, will be vitalized. To most Londoners the fact that the nerve for that sensation is inborn in their own frames is wholly unknown. Let the fact be borne witness to on a truly metropolitan scale, and we shall soon hear another side to the story that in this metropolis 'the supply of good music outruns the demand.'

And now as to practical difficulties. The large covered space would, one cannot doubt, be supplied if the band were guaranteed. The Hall of the People's Palace is, I fear, too small, though it might do to begin with; but either Victoria Park or Columbia Market would afford a

a great deal to bring the matter to a more decided test. I used to wish at South Kensington that cards could be distributed to every one on entering, with a printed request that all who cared to do so would fill in below the names of the three pieces in the programme that they liked the best, and would return the cards on going out. Every evening that I was there several things were played which, I am certain, would not have found a place on any single card. It cannot seem pedantic to wish to exclude from every programme to the end of time pieces which give no ray of melodic delight, and which leave no single hearer with the slightest desire ever to hear or think of them again.

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splendid site, and the construction might be of the roughest kind. But the cost of the band is more serious; it could not, as far as I can learn, be less than 5,000*l.* a year, or say a capital sum of 100,000*l.* Even this would of course not supply first-rate players, as the nightly employment would preclude other orchestral engagements; but fifty good second-class players, who, from constantly working together, might develop into a very effective band, could, I believe, be obtained for the above sum. Where is the sum to be found? One's first idea is that there could not be a fitter use for a fraction of the enormous income liberated by the reform of the City charities. Can any mode of expenditure be named which is more completely covered by the terms of Mr. Bryce's Act, or by which such a sum of public money could be made to yield so large a harvest of public enjoyment? Before another generation has passed, such a question may have a practical bearing; but at present I scarcely venture to hope for help from any public source. Still less do I imagine that, amid urgent claims on every side, it would be either possible or desirable to divert into this particular channel as much as 5,000*l.* from the aggregate fund annually contributed by private persons to London

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charities. It seems, then, that the thing must be done, if at all by the musical public—by the extra liberality of those among us who not only love Music, but believe in it. To what extent my faith is actually shared, I cannot tell. There are people, as it is often dispiriting to find, by whom the art in which lies the chief interest and pleasure of their lives has never been seriously considered as anything but a delightful appanage of prosperity and refinement. But among the thousands of well-to-do English men and women in whom the musical interest is strong, there are some, I know, who will admit the view here sketched to be based on facts; and others probably are open to conviction on the matter, if haply they could be led to look and observe for themselves. Will a thousand of these persons give 100*l.*? Or is it, perhaps, less quixotic to ask if a hundred will give 1000*l.*? Or must we wait on the off-chance of a millionaire who can seize the situation, and who will be inspired to do at a stroke the greatest deed—putting creation aside—ever done for Music? I am not even sure that that saving clause is needed. If it is much 'to make undying music,' it is surely not much less to make music undying.

Meanwhile, however, I cannot help suggesting

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one way in which a start might be made. There is, as it happens, one private fund marked out as beyond all comparison the fittest for the money to come from, and the tapping of which, so far from draining off a penny from any other beneficial employment, would simply relieve the givers and their friends from a certain amount of ennui and discomfort—the fund, namely, which provides the most expensive sort of society-music at evening parties during the season. The money spent in depressing a few scores or hundreds of lives during twenty or thirty hours in the year at one end of London, would operate to brighten as many thousands or tens of thousands of lives during six hundred hours in the year at the other end; and at the same time fashionable England would be relieved of the reproach of encouraging the most brainless and soulless form of virtuososhiip that ever got itself patented as the artistic pick-me-up of a cultivated society. I do not wish to exaggerate, and am willing to believe that mingled with those who are simply annoyed and aggrieved by the enforced hush of the conversation, there are a few who experience a pleasing titillation as they hear, for the hundredth time, the nerveless Italian cadences and mechanical trills and roulades issue

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from some well-practised larynx. But will a single member of this latter class tell me that the titillation is an important fact in his life, or even in his artistic life—that the prospect of the next season or the next evening would be perceptibly darkened to him if this element were to be lacking? If he cares for music as glorious art, are there not public concerts where its fullest glories are displayed? If he cares for music as sugary sound, are there not the Opera and the 'Star' concerts, where the same prima-donnas deal out the same sensuous strains, considerably sweetened in quality by space and distance? Honestly, and putting the matter on the lowest ground, what would the loss of happiness in the West, to be set against the gain in the East, actually amount to? Would there be a single twinge of pain in a single human breast, if the old drawing-room régime were at this moment declared at an end? And to think that, for the price thus wasted, a new world might instantly be opened to multitudes who have never so much as guessed its existence, and its language, never heard before, prove more native to them than their own! Even apart from the regular evenings of innocent and restful enjoyment while the music was actually going on, to think that a score of

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the great tunes of the world might get into the air, as the barrel-organ melodies do—might get domiciled in the streets where the sunshine has so poor a chance; wafting some at least of the dwellers there, in many a chance moment, out of the midst of care and squalor, to the heights of the utmost beauty that the spirit of man has ever scaled!

I am putting the matter, as I have said, on the lowest ground. I am not asking any one to make sacrifices for the sake of others. Keeping still to that ground, can we suppose that the credit and glory which now attach to the giving of expensive musical soirées would be diminished in the case of the men and women who should adopt the plan I have suggested—who should spread their soirées over the whole year, and multiply their guests by thousands?

It happened that some months after the above remarks were first printed, another appeal appeared which led or rather drove me to add a few words to my own. In an account of 'Half an Hour in the College of Music,' published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Sir George Grove was made to say, 'How can we be called a musical nation, when we spend

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millions a year to hear German or Italian music played and sung by German and Italian musicians; and when, if one is asked, "Who is your best English pianoforte-player?" there is literally no answer to make? This is shameful, and must be put right.' And to help to put it right he asked for an additional 100,000*l.* He ought to have it. But the sum—as I could not help remembering—was the very one that I had named as the practical measure of a scheme which, from the 'national' point of view, has an incalculably higher claim. The question whether a nation is musical—I have elsewhere suggested—must be decided, not by the birthplace of the persons whom it pays for its music, but by the quantity and quality of the musical nutriment that it can itself enjoy and assimilate. Judged by this test, the musicalness of our nation is an ocean that will never be fathomed. If this is a rash assertion, it is at any rate one in which I find myself supported by every one who has ventured beyond the shallows of 'society,' and taken the trouble to throw out the plumb-line. But the truth will be recognised, not by galvanising more superfine musicians into existence, but by getting for the superfine music that already exists some sort of popular hearing—by doing, in fact, for this



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art, at much less cost and for a much wider effect, what we do as a matter of course for other arts at the National Gallery and British Museum. I mean no disrespect to those innermost shrines of musical life, 'with their soft pile carpets,' where the Rubinsteins and Sarasates of the rising generation sit battling with arpeggios and double-shakes; indirectly they may help to quicken and multiply the far more important centres—the domestic shrines, scattered all over the land, where the gods of Music are worshipped as familiar presences. But meanwhile we wait in vain for the sort of musical centre which should be the most important of all to a people whose masses can at present find change and recreation only in the public-house, and lack all means and all aptitude for performance—the 'National Gallery' of Music, where fine tunes may be daily presented gratis, as fine pictures are, to all who choose to have them; with the immense advantage over the pictures, that they are enjoyed by sitting still and doing nothing, instead of by walking about and putting the head at unusual angles, and thus present that ideal recreation, the combination of excitement with rest. Why is it not more widely recognised that the sort of endowment which I have suggested is the

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*true* analogue and the *only* analogue in Music to those sumptuous treasure-houses in Trafalgar Square and Great Russell Street? Why should a nation which 'has ears but not eyes' devote 70,000*l.* in a single year to bringing itself into direct contact with Raphael through one sense, and not have devoted a penny in fifty years to bringing itself into direct contact with Beethoven through another? Can any single reason be assigned why Music should not at least be 'levelled up'?

'But even for that,' it will be said, 'training-schools are needed; the performers must be well trained if the music is to be adequately rendered.' Of course they must; but for the purpose which I propose the present supply of well-trained performers is amply sufficient. When there comes to be—as in time there may—an efficient permanent orchestra in every large town in the kingdom, good teaching will of course have to be extended. But a metropolitan city is wholly exceptional. For no town except London do we spend thousands annually on pictures; and what I am urging is simply a conspicuous start, a representative exhibition, a great metropolitan example. For the immediate establishment of a large and efficient band at the East-End of London all that



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is wanted is money. The great composers will do the rest; they are great, just because they can do the rest; and the rest, I make bold to say, means nothing less than one of the greatest social reforms of the generation. Does not such a result suggest a larger evolution of happiness, and a greater development of national musical life, than even Sir G. Grove's 'fifty more open scholarships'? I do not think that he himself would deny it; for he is far enough from the Pharisaism which would make music an esoteric cult, and which we have lately seen reach the pitch of identifying a 'national art' with occasional picked performances to the passionate pilgrims of Bayreuth. An epicure's feast may be 'an entirely holy thing' in its way; so may a school of gymnasts; but a nation does not get its food from the one or its strength from the other. As little will it be made musical by the fact that connoisseurs can have their finest taste for executive perfection gratified, or that a free course of training is offered to promising voices and lissom fingers. A great melody is worth a thousand prima-donnas; and the permanent means of spreading great melodies broadcast, at an annual cost of far less than a single prima-donna's income, is an aim beside which any multi-

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plication of individual proficiency looks insignificant.

Not that I would for a moment represent the two aims as antagonistic. For his own sake, and for that of his cause, the gifted and enthusiastic Director of the College of Music deserves all he can obtain; and so far as his pupils become nuclei for the popular spread of their art—for example, in the way of organising amateur orchestras and singing classes throughout the country—they will do very much to justify the name of 'national' for their place of education. But that remark about the 'best pianoforte-player' chilled the heart with a vision of superlative soloists, and practice made perfect with a view to expensive display. And under the influence of that chill I cannot but contrast the two schemes;—the one, whose basis is the knowledge that we *are* a musical nation, and that the only thing needed to prove it beyond cavil is to let us hear music; and the other, whose basis is the assumption that we are *not* a musical nation, but that we shall become one on the day that the fingers of some born Englishman shall perform more marvellous feats of execution or expression than those of his foreign rivals.

But I know that I talk to the winds; it is

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so much more convenient to acquiesce in assumptions than to face the responsibilities of knowledge. The golden bridge between our joyless populations and the new world where most of them would be instantly at home will not be supplied in our day. Double shakes will continue to be applauded; gin will continue to be drunk; and fortunately those for whom I plead will know nothing of what they miss. Sir G. Grove can afford to treat my complaint with indulgence; for he will get his 100,000*l.*, and I shall never get mine.

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## *POETS, CRITICS, AND CLASS-LISTS.*

'COMPARISONS are odious,' is an aphorism commonly accepted—always, however, as reflection will show us, with reference to other people's comparisons, and never to our own. There are in reality few commoner signs of any sort of mental alertness than the love of comparison and classification for its own sake—the tendency to dwell on degrees of superiority and inferiority as such. We can trace its presence equally in the schoolboy's deep curiosity or still deeper conviction as to 'the best' and 'the next best' in the various departments of cricket, in the Swiss tourist's unfailing interest in realising which peak is higher and which lower than another, and in the national enthusiasm with which we regard a Newton or a Nelson. The affection is not easy to analyse; but its main ingredient is, perhaps, just the primary instinct to take a side—the instinct of partisanship which comes out among the specta-

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tors of every sort of contest, and which, *e.g.*, would make ninety-nine Londoners out of a hundred, even though innocent of the remotest connection with either of the contending Universities, feel ashamed of admitting complete indifference as to the result of the annual boat-race. And in its more refined forms, where the element of hero-worship more or less enters, the instinct of comparison is really so valuable a way of adding interest to our intellectual life, that to be destitute of it may be accounted a misfortune and a proof of torpor. It quickens passive perception into active participation. A personal and emotional colouring is given to the act of judgment, when one's own mind is recognised, not as a mere register, nor even as a passionless umpire, but as the sensitive and sympathetic stage on which one's heroes have actually to measure their strength and find their level—as the living and independent means through which the degrees of their excellence become distinct realities.

But like everything else which tends to a sense of one's own centrality, this habit of classification needs watching. In matters of daily intercourse we all recognise the odiousness of comparisons, when something that is moving our approbation is forced into disadvantageous contrast with something

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else, absent or unknown to us, the suggestion of which chills our pleasure in proportion as it warms the self-importance of the person who introduces it. And further on we may have to notice that this sort of bad manners is not wholly lacking in literary criticism. But I want now more particularly to notice another danger, one affecting not the manner but the validity of the criticism; I mean the assumption that, because the justice of our classification is keenly felt, it is therefore demonstrable. We first attempt to give clearness and solidity to our position in our own minds by means of a formula, by entrenching our convictions behind some short and convenient canon or principle; neglecting thereby the chance that their truth, even for us, may be a very composite thing, whose strength and weight is really disposed over many points. And then, as the fact of having our own order of merit is inseparable from the impulse to convince others of its justice, and as the normal mode of convincing others of anything is by argument, we are naturally led into trying to make argument cover the ground, just as we tried to make our formula cover it; which, in turn, may involve us in the struggle to prove or confirm by argumentative methods what really belongs in

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large measure to the domain of instinct, and is as unamenable to reason as tastes and scents—much as though one should try to secure a sunbeam that has visited one's chamber by strengthening the floor and walls.

This danger belongs to verbal treatment of all imaginative work; but the field where it is most prominent is that of literary, and specially of poetical, criticism. In other arts, the need of a purely unreasoning faculty, of something in both producer and percipient which cannot be put into words—an 'eye for colour,' an 'ear for music'—is too obvious to be for long lost sight of. Not, indeed, but that it often *is* lost sight of; but the very inadequacy of any attempts to convey in words what is the essence of the effect in these other directions acts as a sort of antidote, and would alone suffice to keep before us the radical truth. The arts present, in this connection, a natural ascending series. Music, in its abstraction and aloofness from visible and intellectual subject-matter, is naturally the one where reason soonest deserts the field; and, as a rule, the expository efforts so common in musical programmes, after telling us all that the composer had in his mind and *meant* to say, end by naïvely admitting that what concerns us is, after all, what

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he *did* say—to wit, a certain self-justified succession of tones, appreciable only by means of a particular faculty which knows no law but its own. A similarly independent and wholly abstract element gives meaning to such a term as 'visual harmonies.' It is the exclusive source of pleasure in the pattern of the sporting handkerchief, so humorously depicted by Mr. Ruskin; and it has a vague but large share in the pleasure of architectural combinations. But not only are the principles of proportion here more describable than in Music, but there begins to be a large infusion of a more concrete element; and the author just named has nowhere used words with more persuasive truth and eloquence than in tracing the subtle but still penetrable affinities between features of buildings and the human life which they encompass. Still passing on in the direction of the concrete, we come to plastic and pictorial art, where the presence of visible and independently comprehensible subject-matter gives words a far larger chance—a chance too of being used in the wrong direction as well as in the right; so that against Mr. Ruskin's lessons of truthful and loving scrutiny of Nature, drawn from the demonstrable presence or absence of it in the work of particular men, we have to set the irritation of criticism like Lessing's,

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when he elaborately supplies us with reasons why we cannot help admiring works which we perhaps do not admire at all, or argues out his evidences of consummate plastic imagination from points of treatment which might have occurred to any blind child of ordinary intelligence. But it is naturally when we come to Poetry—the art which deals not only with visible aspects of life, but with all life, with the whole sphere of the concrete, and not only has this as its subject, but has words themselves as its material—that verbal exposition finds its freest scope. Here it is that reasoned criticism will go furthest towards covering the field; and in proportion to the extent which it really will cover, and to the amount of excellent and illuminating work that it can do and has done, is the danger that the part which it will not cover, the part which, like the essence of Music, cannot be explained or argued about, will be ignored. Even the admission of its existence in a passing phrase will be apt to remain a dead letter. It is with difficulty that the critic who feels that he has to fight, and that Reason is his sole weapon, can avoid language implying that in wielding it he is dealing with the whole, instead of a part only, of the artistic results which he appraises.

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And nowhere does either the impulse towards argumentative criticism, or the limit of its efficiency, appear so clearly as in that point of comparison and classification with which we started, and by which a good half of poetical controversy is animated and dominated. For were Reason able to provide us with assured canons, free from all taint of idiosyncrasy, from which orders of poetical merit might be conclusively deduced, we should surely by now have seen some signs of agreement as to their authority. How much agreement has Reason produced?

Consider the controversy which is absolutely perennial in private debates on literary subjects, and which some three or four years ago engaged the pens of such doughty champions that it may take its place as a classical instance of ineradicable literary differences—the controversy as to the relative greatness of the three most conspicuous English poets of the early part of this century. Of the three prominent critics who entered the lists in this dispute, each made a different classification. Mr. Matthew Arnold's order is Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley; Mr. Alfred Austin's is Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley; Mr. Swinburne's is Shelley, Wordsworth, Byron, the two latter being perhaps bracketed, on

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the view that Wordsworth's great achievements were the higher in quality but the less in amount. Each order would find other powerful advocates. I imagine, for instance, that Mr. Ruskin would agree with Mr. Austin, and Mr. Symonds with Mr. Swinburne, while Mr. Myers and many others would place Wordsworth first and Shelley second. Probably every one who takes a serious interest in Poetry has his order, and would be ready to give some reasons for it. Let us glance at some of the reasons that have been lately given.

Mr. Swinburne's reasons are rather stated in impressive language than developed in any systematic way. They are, briefly, that Wordsworth was tainted with Philistinism, and that Byron could not sing; while it is assumed without question or argument that Shelley (besides being free from Philistinism, and outsinging nearly every one) was one of the few prophets, as contrasted with the many pleasure-givers, among poets. But the other two critics have both striven hard to universalise their faith. The standard on which Mr. Arnold bases his estimate has become famous. It is 'criticism of life'; that is what he holds literature, and Poetry as the highest branch of literature, to be essentially concerned with. And he has little diffi-

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culty in showing that Wordsworth's criticism of life was, on the whole, a truer and healthier one than Byron's, while Shelley hardly criticised life at all. Then comes Mr. Austin, and in two very striking and suggestive papers[1] opposes Mr. Arnold's position. By dint of rigorously confining 'criticism' to the meaning of *passing judgment*, he in turn has little difficulty in showing that, of the great poets of the world, some have not passed judgments at all, and others have passed judgments in which the advance of society has shown the most serious limitations. Some of Mr. Austin's subsidiary contentions scarcely seem so strong. For instance, he objects that 'to make the relative greatness of a poet depend upon the healthfulness and truth of his criticism of life is to place the estimate of his poetry at the mercy of the opinion of anybody and everybody as to what is a true and healthy criticism of life, about which no consensus exists'—a *reductio ad absurdum* which surely has no force unless through a totally unwarranted assumption that there exists some transcendental estimate of Poetry to which every individual not only should but will conform. The fact that persons differ as to what

[1] In the *Contemporary Review* for December 1881 and January 1882.

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is the true criticism of life no more affects Mr. Arnold's canon, no more precludes him from holding that there is a true criticism of life as opposed to an untrue, and that the greater poet gives the truer criticism, than the fact that many call evil good and good evil precludes him from holding that there is a right and wrong in conduct, and that the greater teacher points out the better way. But as regards Mr. Austin's main objection, Mr. Arnold, I imagine, would say that its force rests wholly on the restricted meaning assigned to the word 'criticism'; that that word may fairly claim to include any examination or interpretation of life which clears our views and enlarges our knowledge of it, even though no judgment be explicitly passed *ab extra*; and that in this way Shakespeare, whom Mr. Austin represents as never having criticised life, might be considered as one of its greatest critics, and even one of its greatest moral interpreters; and, indeed, must be so considered, unless Mr. Austin would push his assertion of Shakespeare's objective and impartial treatment of human phenomena to the point of maintaining that we rise from his works in precisely the same emotional attitude towards Iago and Desdemona, and passing precisely similar judgments on Cordelia's conduct and Goneril's.

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Probably, however, 'criticism' did need to have its province more clearly defined; and there can be no doubt that, in opposing to it his own standard —objective *representation* of life—and estimating poets by the amount of life they have represented, Mr. Austin has suggested much of what might be found lacking in the other standard. But he, in turn, illustrates the danger of putting all one's eggs into one basket, and making a single criterion of excellence bear the burden of all the comparative estimates which we can or should make of poets. He gives a very eloquent account of the ideal objective poet—the poet with the most catholic and impersonal sympathies and the greatest absence of private prepossessions; and then, as a proof that such an account must exhibit the one standard by which poetical achievement should be judged, he thinks it enough to say, 'Is it not true of Shakespeare?'—forgetting that it is every whit as much *un*true of another poet whose fame can certainly not be said to be lower or less deserved than Shakespeare's—of Dante. However much Dante represented the life of his age, he did so from an intensely subjective and critical standpoint, and his individual character is as prominent in his artistic work as Shakespeare's is the reverse. Nor is this



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the case merely in respect of his character as a patriot, or an exile, or a religious or political partisan, or even a worshipper of ideal love; he reveals more wholly personal traits than any of these heads would imply. Take as an instance the exquisite courtesy, for its delicacy almost unique in literature, which prompts him to open his address to the blinded company in Purgatory with the words,

O gente sicura di veder l' alto lume—

or which made him just before refuse even to glance at the sufferers who could not see him in return—feeling the respect due from man to man to be such that merely a look, merely a passing exhibition of interest and excitement in misfortune which we are powerless to aid, is a sort of wrong, an 'oltraggio,' something consciously won by us out of others' pain. If things like this exemplify what Mr. Arnold calls 'the noble and profound application to life of ideas which the poet has acquired for himself,' and if it is on things like this that much of our special love for Dante's poetry depends, we can hardly accept as complete or unique a canon which would make a poet great in proportion as such ideas are kept out of sight.

We need not pursue further this specimen of a

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controversy which might well be endless. Everybody may learn something from the reasonings of those who differ from him on such a subject; but is there nothing else to learn? When Goethe's youthful companions were engrossed each with the conviction that his own school-essay was the best, Goethe alone had self-detachment enough to grasp the incident as a whole, and to see the lesson of all these incompatible convictions. And might not critics of Poetry learn more than they do from the great primary fact that these differences exist? For it is difficult to imagine any meaning for the 'greatness' of a poet, or any canon whereby it might be sought to assert objective rightness for a particular classification of poets, which would not *pro tanto* be invalidated by the fact that a considerable number of persons, similarly interested in the subject and sincere admirers of all the candidates, adopt with equal assurance a quite different classification. At any rate, if there be any such esoteric meanings and canons, they find no place in ordinary criticism, which seems always to use 'greatness' and the degrees of the adjective 'great' with a certain reference, understood if not expressed, to the general verdict. The critic is not content with giving reasons why so and so is great, greater, or greatest, but speaks



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as if this is a truth which must prevail in the world at large. And so strong is this instinct of faith that even the serious discordance of view here and now leaves it undisturbed; the critic merely shifts the arena, and teaches us to look for the really authoritative verdict elsewhere and hereafter. The rival muses are to find their Paris in the voice of posterity or in the judgment of foreigners—perhaps *at* Paris! One may doubt, however, whether this appeal can be really meant to be taken as altogether final. Even supposing Frenchmen to remain for ever blind to the peculiar magic of Wordsworth (which, I think, is likely), or if, in the year 1900, there are as many English dissentients as there would be now from the view that he is the greatest English poet of the century (which, I think, is by no means improbable), I hardly think that Mr. Arnold would abandon his own opinion on the subject. And if this be so, surely the actual discordance of view might suggest something else than the projection of the ideal unanimity into future and dubious regions. It might at least suggest that the mistake has lain in over-simplification, and that the field of dispute has been unduly narrowed, and that the actual competition between the poets, on the arena of men's minds, is something larger than

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a competition between two or three compact principles.

But it suggests more than this. It suggests the pervading importance of some element in a poet's work which a critic cannot elucidate, or bring into relation with the various debateable aspects of intellectual and emotional life, and which he is powerless, therefore, to make others share—an element of beauty lying beyond the scope of knowledge, even of emotional and imaginative knowledge. This latter knowledge includes, of course, much of what is poetically beautiful, so that I am urging no such truism as that to know and to enjoy are different things. My point is one which, if it be despised as a truism, is often ignored as a truth—namely, that any poetry which we love in the most characteristic way, which is for us poetry *par excellence*, contains for us another quite distinct sort of beauty, the perception of which stands outside any relations of fact which it is now in our power to define, and must therefore be accepted as a matter of irreversible taste and instinct. Now, it is a well-known characteristic of convictions resting on taste and instinct that our feeling of their being normal, and such as others must somehow or other share, is strong almost in proportion to its blind-

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ness and lack of logical standpoint. In questions of taste we may perpetually observe an eagerness of advocacy such as is seldom exhibited in matters which are accurately demonstrable. So that both that tendency to appeal to the general verdict and that personal sense of rightness independent of it, on which I have remarked, may be taken as signs of this elusive element in poetical work. And even the critic who is most earnest in assigning to poets their rank according to the rational importance and scope of the things they have said would never, I must maintain, have thought of arguing for that as their *poetical* rank, had not some portions of their work been pervaded for him by a quality quite impenetrable to his arguments; nor can I for a moment imagine that, if either Mr. Arnold or Mr. Austin should by his reasonings convert the other on the question as to what is the prime reasonable canon of excellence, such conversion would bring about any *bonâ-fide* change of classification. To the luckless reader, at any rate, who finds himself assenting to each side in turn, it will bring satisfaction to believe that the order of merit was not in either case deduced by the application of the standard, but had been a strong reality in the critic's mind long before his standard

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was evolved to justify it, and that the difference in the orders of merit may well mean, not that either standard is wrong, but that both are incomplete; while there is nothing unreasonable in their incompatibility, if what is needed to complete them is an element essentially unamenable to reason.

The same conclusion might, I think, be drawn by nearly everybody who cares and talks about Poetry, in reference to private discussions. To the familiar experience that our estimates and preferences seem very often to lie outside the sort of arguments produced in opposition to them, or equally (let us confess) in defence of them, we shall be able to add the following observation—that the points which figure in controversy are often not points on which the controversialists are really much parted; that it is not something which the one party can and does express that the other really dissents from, but something which the one cannot and does not express that the other is more or less unconscious of. My own experience, at any rate, is that I hardly ever distinctly or strongly differ from the remarks that I encounter about poetry of any degree of admitted excellence, except so far as they set up or imply comparisons. Whatever it be that is dwelt upon—subtle insight

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into character, deep sympathy with Nature, life finally criticised, life finely represented, originality or scope of conception, robustness or delicacy of language—it really is usually there in such degree as fairly to justify what is said about it. Of course there are exceptions. I suppose that, if one read through the volume that has been written on three sonnets of Petrarch's, one might find a good deal that one would resist as overstrained and ridiculous. But it is usually disparagement that begets resistance; and disparagement is happily far less common than praise, and moreover is usually comparative rather than absolute—for instance, Lord Lytton's recent disparagement of Dante[1] may be charitably ascribed to a wish to magnify Mr. Wilfrid Blunt. And as a rule, when criticism of poetry stirs in the average breast a sense of resistance, I believe that it is not nearly so much the resistance of distinctly differing from what is said, as the duller feeling that in spite of this, that, or the other merit, the noble sentiment, the sympathetic eye, the luxuriant imagination, the musical language—the very terms that one uses in vindication of one's own favourites—the particular poem is still one which will never become part of one's

[1] In the *Nineteenth Century* for November 1881.

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life, and as far as oneself is concerned might almost as well not have existed. Neglecting this feeling, and provided only that all expressions of comparison be neglected, most poetry-lovers will, I think, find that what any person of any degree of sensibility and culture says about poets and poems, especially his favourite poets and poems, contains an immense percentage of truth. But so far as people say what is true, the things said cannot seriously conflict; so that if the things people could say and have said on this subject went to the root of their verdicts, their verdicts ought to present remarkable unanimity. And as we find that the very opposite is the case, the natural inference is that their pleadings do not go to the root of their verdicts, and that the difference in their verdicts largely depends on differences of susceptibility to an element of whose seeming presence or absence they can give no rational account.

I have said that some phrase admitting an element which cannot be discussed usually occurs in the course of poetical discussion. Mr. Austin quotes passages of verse to exemplify what is and what is not poetry, and confesses that the difference defies analysis; that he knows when the verse *is* poetry, but not how it comes to be poetry. And

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this element, which he cannot isolate or analyse, he describes as that which turns representation into transfiguration, and he identifies it with imagination. 'Poetry,' he says, 'is an imaginative representation, in verse or rhythm, of whatever men perceive, feel, think, or do.' But here one must surely demur to the looseness of the word 'imaginative.' For that word is naturally and truly applied to a great deal of work in prose; and between such prose and poetry the only difference left, according to Mr. Austin's definition, would be that the latter is in 'verse or rhythm'; whence it would follow that if such prose were turned into verse, by a mere re-arrangement of the verbal material in which it is presented, it would necessarily and in all cases become genuine poetry—a conclusion which I think that no one on reflection could accept. Again, Mr. Arnold tells us that the criticism of life, which the poet applies to his subject, is applied 'under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth.' But once more I must cavil at the phrase, which appears to me thoroughly delusive. For it suggests something the nature and scope of which is matter of general recognition and agreement—something similar to the 'laws of harmony' in Music, which, so far as they are laws

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at all, no one who publishes music transgresses save by the rarest accident; whereas, so far from the part of the matter thus left outside criticism having any certainty of application, it is mainly in it (as I shall argue) that the differences which criticism labours to remove have their roots. But apart from this, 'laws of poetic beauty,' in a critic's mouth, amount simply to a confession that, with all his efforts, he has rendered no complete account of the faith that is in him. The phrase serves conveniently to cover all that his exposition has left uncovered, but it leaves us quite uncertain what it is meant to include. It does not necessarily mean more than that *L'Assommoir*, which (if we allow to criticism the extended sense above suggested) undeniably criticises more life more truly than *Paradise Lost*, would not, when hitched into alexandrines, make a superior poem. From Mr. Arnold's treatment of Byron's metrical flaws, however, we may perhaps gather that he includes metrical accuracy among his immutably-fixed conditions; yet even here, where he comes nearest to what is wanted, he leaves us quite uncertain as to how deep he considers that point to go—*e.g.* whether he holds that Byron's rank could have been established had such flaws been perpetually prominent in all his work—if he

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had always written in the style of 'The Two Principles,' and never in the style of 'The Isles of Greece.' Nor in his essay on Wordsworth does he ever recur to the above phrase as though it contained a vital point, but rests his whole advocacy on purely rational grounds; and he has written sentences which tend to show that he would oppose any attempt to set excellence in respect of any magical or non-reasonable element in the balance against excellence of the reasonable and debateable kind. For he says that he ranks Wordsworth above Leopardi, in spite of what he holds Leopardi's superiority as an artist—and this, whatever else it includes, beyond doubt includes our non-reasonable element—on account of the superiority of Wordsworth's criticism of life; and says it in such a way as to imply that, if we agree with him on this latter point, the poetic superiority is incontestable. Again, he says that Wordsworth 'left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness' to that of any poet (Goethe excepted) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but in expanding this view he dwells wholly on points in Wordsworth's poems which represent his attitude to life and Nature, and which can thus be made matter of interesting discussion.

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He does not recognise among these 'qualities which give enduring freshness' any element before which the critic must stand helpless and discussion cease.

At this point, however, it will probably occur to the reader that we are going too fast. 'Let it be granted,' he may say, 'that the short, simple canons and definitions break down—that there is no such royal road to sound æsthetic judgments as Mr. Arnold and Mr. Austin have supposed. Still, criticism like theirs by no means exhausts the field open to reasoned discussion of a poet's work. They judge his poems in the gross; but his poems consist of poetry, and the poetry can be judged in detail—line after line, feature after feature. The relation of emotion to expression is far from being altogether a mystery; particular effects of poetic style and diction often have causes which can be assigned and "reasonably" demonstrated, quite apart from "representation" or "criticism of life"; and we must not at once fall back on "magic" and a "non-reasonable element," merely because attempts to appraise poetry by its wider subject-matter alone prove inadequate.' Now this is, of course, perfectly true. That Poetry consists largely of these reasonable

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beauties is a fact that might be illustrated in a hundred ways. One specially frequent and obvious way is the mere fitness between the sentiment of a passage and its investiture of imagery. Thus, Shelley's stanzas on the exchange, at duty's call, of loved companionship for loveless solitude—

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drunk the last pale beam of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.
Pause not! the time is past! Every voice cries 'Away!' &c.—

present a beauty of this kind which it is quite easy (though happily quite unnecessary) to make explicit and talk about. But many less tangible points of expression can also be reasonably treated, in the sense of being referable to recognised general principles. These principles seem to be just two in number: the pleasure of *harmony*, as where the language in its style or flow is markedly suitable to the sense; and the pleasure of *contrast*, when it comes under the head of 'unity in variety.'[1] An example or two will make each definite. The change from iambic to trochaic rhythm in the middle of *The Lotus-eaters* is too well known to

[1] This principle of 'unity in variety' is doubtless at the root of our pleasure in *metaphorical* language, which is, again, an ob-

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quote; but for a more sustained adaptation of language to meaning, literature contains perhaps nothing finer than this passage in the *Vision of Sin*:—

> Then methought I heard a mellow sound,
> Gathering up from all the lower ground;
> Narrowing in to where they sat assembled,
> Low voluptuous music winding trembled,
> Wov'n in circles: they that heard it sigh'd,
> Panted hand in hand with faces pale,
> Swung themselves, and in low tones replied;
> Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
> Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail;
> Then the music touch'd the gates and died;
> Rose again from where it seem'd to fail,
> Storm'd in orbs of song, a growing gale;
> Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,
> As 'twere a hundred-throated nightingale,
> The strong tempestuous treble throbbed and palpitated;
> Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
> Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
> Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
> Flung the torrent rainbow round:

viously 'reasonable' element. Explicable beauties of this sort may, of course, be frequent even in the most baffling verses. Thus, in an example *par excellence* of the intangible in poetry, Shelley's *Life of Life*, the lines—

> In those looks, where whoso gazes
> Faints, entangled in their mazes—

present, in the image, at least one completely seizable point. This couplet, by the way, was not improved, in proof, by the printer's substitution of *books* for *looks*—not made, I trust, with any special reference to the present discussion.

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Then they started from their places,
Moved with violence, changed in hue,
Caught each other with wild grimaces,
Half-invisible to the view,
Wheeling with precipitate paces
To the melody, till they flew,
Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces,
Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
Like to Furies, like to Graces,
Dash'd together in blinding dew:
Till, kill'd with some luxurious agony,
The nerve-dissolving melody
Flutter'd headlong from the sky.

The effect here is, of course, one of movement and cadence of a very pronounced sort. A good case of harmony of mere style, apart from any special rhythmic peculiarity, is the stanza from Mr. Browning's *Youth and Art*—

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eyes' tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up—

where the colloquial phrase in the second line, and the ingeniously surprising rhymes of the third and fourth, give exactly the petulant turn of humour that befits the sense. Another stylistic point of which the rare beauty is completely explicable and reasonable, while yet depending on a rhyme, occurs in a later stanza of the same poem—

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Each life unfulfilled, you see ;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy :
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired, been happy—

where the distinction of the last two words clearly is that from their metrical position they can do double duty—forming the strict antithesis to 'despaired,' as 'laughed free' does to 'sighed deep' and 'feasted' to 'starved,' but also standing in apposition to all the preceding part of the couplet, and resuming and interpreting its whole meaning.

The principle of *contrast* could not be better exemplified than by the lines in a famous passage of *Paradise Lost*——

The other shape,
If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, and limb ;
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either—

where the wonderful effect may in part, at any rate, be traced to the combination of the clear-cut simplicity, the logical compactness, in the form of the description, with the weird and horrible vagueness of the idea.

It would be easy and amusing to trace the various applications of these two principles through a number of instances. But to do so would



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require a separate Essay. Nor is such dissecting out of verbal and stylistic features a sort of analysis that, from the point of view of appreciation, seems profitable. Indeed its effect may rather be to make the beauties seem *less* beautiful by robbing them of their directness of appeal; just as many a beginner in the study of musical harmony must have found that certain 'lost chords' lost something when they were found, and that certain favourite effects shed a portion of their intangible charm as their construction and the laws of their treatment became obvious. And as regards Poetry, I am much more concerned to emphasise the fact that quintessentially poetic passages abound where such analysis finds no opportunity —where there is no peculiarity of style or diction that can be isolated for inspection, and where any comment that we can supply is merely descriptive, and not in the least explanatory. It does not help us to the secret of the lines—

> Across the hills, and far away
> Beyond their utmost purple rim,
> And deep into the dying day
> The happy princess followed him—

to say that the style is early Tennyson, and the diction enchanting; yet I doubt if much more can

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be said. Or take that most haunting strain of Mr. Swinburne's--

> So hath it been, so be it,
> For who shall live and flee it?
> But look that no man see it
> Or hear it unaware;
> Lest all who love and choose him
> See Love, and so refuse him;
> For all that find him lose him,
> But all have found him fair.

Wherein lies its rarity? In a magical use of monosyllabic words? Yes, truly; but we succumb to it because it is magical, not because it is monosyllabic. Let me suggest another version:—'So has it been; so let it be; for who of men shall be spared? But keep it far from their eyes and from their ears; lest they who might choose Love for their well-beloved should know him, and so pass him by; for fair he is to those that find him, but lost as soon as found.' The non-reasonable element is assuredly worth thinking about if, as I venture to hold, the difference between these joyless sentences and Mr. Swinburne's lines consists in nothing else.

Now those who care most about Poetry find the poetry that they care most about redolent of this unanalysable charm. And it seems probable



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that the sort of analysis before described, even where it is applicable, is held to account for much more than it really does, just because people only apply it where there is some very distinct charm to be accounted for, and do not think of trying whether similar points of artistic fitness might not be discovered in a vast amount of modern verse which yet no one cares much about. I believe that such discoveries might easily be made, but will not inflict any of them on the reader. It is enough to perceive that, if the maximum of poetical charm can make itself felt in passages where reasonable analysis is obviously inadequate, much of the charm of passages where it is less inadequate probably depends on the presence of a non-reasonable element. But if a more clinching proof be needed of the far-reaching influence of such an element, it seems enough to point to the constant *untranslateableness* of the best Poetry; for this most distinctive mark of the non-reasonable element in Poetry, as I conceive it, such canons and definitions as Mr. Arnold's and Mr. Austin's seem to leave absolutely no room. It is not only that they supply no grounds why any one of the numerous good verse-translations, in which the sense of a fine poem is irreproachably rendered, should fall far

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short of the original in the impression it is able to produce; but that, if their accounts were sufficient, this indisputable fact would have no existence.

I must hold, then, that our non-reasonable element requires much more attention than it has received. It is like a chemical residuum, which introduces error into any calculations that venture to ignore it. And in attending to it we fortunately run no risk of dissecting away the life of any poetry that is dear to us. On the contrary, the more its general nature and scope are realised, the more hopeless and useless will such dissections appear. We need not shrink, therefore, from pushing as far as we can the question in what it consists.

The almost universal habit of those who treat of it at all is to treat it as having only one constituent, and to identify it with the purely *musical* or *sensory* element in verse. There is a great temptation to adopt this treatment, in that it gives the matter a look of simplicity and avoids all cross-divisions; and some readers have probably seen little but pedantry in my presenting the differentiating quality of Poetry as a *problem*, when the

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key to it is so perfectly obvious. The purely musical element involved, the part which appeals exclusively to the ear and represents and depends on nothing outside itself, stands out in clear and unmistakable contrast to the part which appeals exclusively to the intellect, and which depends on an external world of material and spiritual facts; and a convenient distinction of language marks the former as the simply presentative, even as it marks the latter as the representative element.[1] How convenient, therefore, to assume that the element in Poetry which so enormously affects our estimate of it, while still baffling our analysis and defying our arguments, is none other than this musical or presentative element; which, in the very fact that its appeal is to a bodily sense and does not represent or depend on anything outside itself, reveals the ground why we cannot further analyse it or argue about it.

And a superficial glance at the other arts will seem to confirm such a view. For Music, the art where it is clear that beauty, and the greater and less of it, most completely baffle analysis and defy argument, is also the very type of a presentative art; and in the case of Painting and Sculpture,

[1] See the remarks on pp. 11, 12.

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where, though much in them admits of analysis and argument, we are constantly constrained to recognise a beauty beyond the reach of either, it is again easy and plausible to ascribe this quality to the forms and colours regarded as abstract presentations—*i.e.* as taken in abstraction from what they represent, and presented to the organ of vision on its own and their own account. This easy way with the arts is, however, as misleading as it is convenient. I have tried elsewhere to show how vain it is to suppose that, in looking at the representative forms of Painting and Sculpture, we can make any *bonâ-fide* abstraction of their representative nature, and enjoy their contours in absolute unconsciousness that a marble man means a man, and a painted tree a tree; and that, this being so, the beauty of such forms, even where it is most baffling, can never be truly independent of their character as representations, and must always have its roots in subtle and perhaps infinitely remote associations with the objects and facts of the outside world. The comparison of Poetry with Music gives, perhaps, more excuse for error; for it is (or should be) so plain that the essence of beauty in Music cannot be proved or discussed in terms of reason, and also

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that there is an essential element in Poetry which, like Music, is addressed to the ear, and is even habitually designated by the adjective 'musical,' that the impulse is at first irresistible to regard that part of poetical beauty which we find ourselves unable to prove or discuss in terms of reason as nothing more or less than this 'musical' element.

That it really is something more may, however, be shown by the very simplest experiments. For this musical or presentative element in verse should clearly produce its most unmixed and unmistakable effect on ears which are not further serving as organs for the understanding, and to which the words are mere sounds conveying no ideas or images. This condition is satisfied by the ears of any one who listens to verse in a language which he does not understand; and to make the experiment conclusive we ought of course to take persons of sensitive ear, as shown by their being keenly alive to the pleasure of good verse in languages which they do understand. A very few trials will reveal how extremely slight, and how rapidly tired of, is the pleasure which this exclusive appeal to the ear can really produce; and further, how little its amount in different cases corresponds with the verdicts of a person familiar

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with the language. Masterpieces of verbal 'music' will not be picked out from quite ordinary verses; and quite ordinary verses, read with unction and sonority, will readily be taken on trust as masterpieces. The amount of æsthetic impression producible in a Frenchman, ignorant of English, by Lord Tennyson's best blank verse may not exceed the amount that he would obtain from a sonorous reading of an article in the *Times*, and will probably fall decidedly short of what he would experience from many a rhyming jingle; and to a Greek ear it is probable that even German hexameters, strongly scanned, would have seemed preferable to the stateliest alexandrines.

Every one must, I think, allow how impossible it is that the full delight of Poetry, as distinct from imaginative prose, should result from the mere addition of this faint, monotonous, sensory pleasure to the totally different imaginative pleasure produced by the meaning of the words. But a still more direct proof is possible, if we carefully examine the nature of the change made when Poetry has been stripped of its musical element. What I am urging is so little likely to be fully realised from mere abstract-looking sentences, and depends for its effect so entirely on definite experiment,

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that I may be excused for bringing it at once to the test. I can but select a passage which happens to have for me personally, and for some others may not have, the poetical character in high perfection. For those others, of course, the experiment could only be satisfactorily made through the selection, by each, of one or two passages which have the same character for him. However, there will perhaps be no very wide complaint of the selection of the finest stanza in what many hold to be Wordsworth's masterpiece, the *Ode to Duty*:—

> Stern Lawgiver! yet Thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon Thy face:
> Flowers laugh before Thee on their beds,
> And fragrance in Thy footing treads;
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

Let the third and fourth lines be rendered, 'Nor do we know anything so fair as the smile on thy face.' All will grant that, while the meaning of the sentence for the understanding remains identical, its total effect has been changed, and changed for the worse. Now the alternative is that the

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change either does or does not extend beyond a change in the sensuous impression made by the flow of sound on the ear. Any one who maintains that it does *not* so extend is committed to the following assertion:—That his complete pleasure in the sentence has been diminished *only* by the amount of the fall in pleasure which he will experience if a sentence of poetry in a language unknown to him is read over, first in its proper metrical form, and then in a prose version. And as we have found this amount to be extremely small, the assertion implies that Wordsworth's couplet gives him scarcely more pleasure than my prose version of it. If that is his real experience, there is an end of the matter as regards him. One can but believe that he is in a small minority; and whether he is or not, the difference of result in the case of even one other person would be a fact that nobody could get behind or upset.

As illustrating in another way how different a thing the effect of rhythm in verse is from the mere addition of that quota of satisfaction which the sound as such could afford to the ear, we may further remark that when in the midst of beautiful verse the rhythm suddenly falters, the irritation produced may be quite on a par with the pleasure

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which has preceded it, and immeasurably greater than that produced by a mere break in a series of rhythmic sounds, as when some one momentarily interferes with the ticking of a clock. The nearer analogue would be a false note in a beloved melody. A single instance must suffice. In a beautiful sonnet by Keats occur the lines—

> And calmest thoughts come round us—as of leaves
> Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—autumn suns,
> Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves.

When the passage is familiar, it is just possible, by going at the second of these lines as if it were a five-barred gate, to clear the syllables, *pening in still*, as a single foot, and so to pass along on the regular five-foot rhythm ; but, coming fresh on it, no one could read it save as a line of six feet, as excessive by the whole amount of the word 'budding,' with the result that the back of the metre is completely broken—in a species of verse, too, which is peculiarly bound to formal perfection. We can put up with a halting line in a drama, as we can let pass a false note in a complicated chorus, but not in a lyric or sonnet.

What has obscured the true state of the case is, beyond question, the connotation of the word 'music,' suggesting, as it cannot but do, a pleasure

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which is far more than sensory, and the very reverse of faint and monotonous; so that we easily and vaguely regard the 'musical element' in Poetry as constituting a vast independent source of delight, and as adding to the delight from other sources an amount immensely beyond what proves to be its actual capacity. All the more important is it to observe the poverty of this source on its own account, and to note how radically delusive is the comparison with Music proper, treated in any other way than as a contrast. The extent of the misconception is shown in all sorts of ways. Nothing, for instance, is commoner than to hear it remarked as a strange fact that So-and-so should take such a delight in verse and yet not care for Music. I am not referring to the fashionable habit of regarding all the arts as One, or all as forms of Poetry, or any such vague verbal jugglery; but to the definite idea that an ear which can appreciate verse ought, *ipso facto*, to be what is called 'a musical ear,' an ear which will appreciate Music. Were this so, the 'strange fact' would, of course, be not so much strange as impossible. It is really about as strange as that a person who likes milk-puddings should be indifferent to milk-punch, or *vice versâ*.

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Verse and Music have one element in common—an element of measured rhythm or time-regularity in the order of sounds, most broadly and shortly expressed as regularity of recurrence.[1]

[1] The principle of regularity of recurrence, of anticipation regularly satisfied on a scheme which the analogy of musical bars compels a musician to regard as an *accentual* one, whether the recurring points of division are actually given with greater strength of tone or not, is the fundamental one no less of classical than of modern versification. Much unnecessary confusion has been produced by opposing a scheme of quantities, as the principle of classical metres, to a scheme of accents, as the principle of modern metres; the strict observation of quantities, however delicate and important a feature, being still only one way in which the universal principle of regular recurrence is revealed to the ear, and maintained as the underlying ground of order in the midst of elastic deviations from it. Rhyme in itself is, of course, not an element common to Verse and Music, since Music has no rhyme, but rhyme perpetually assists (in French verse even replaces) accents, as a mode in which regularity of recurrence is exhibited.

I shall have something to say in the next Essay about the difference between Poetry and Music, even in respect of the metrical element whose fundamental principle is common to both; and about the total irrelevance to Music of any delicate verbal melody, and the strange absurdity of representing (as M. de Banville does) ability to be sung as 'la condition indispensable et première de toute poésie,' or asserting (as Dr. Hueffer does) the 'identity of musical and metrical laws.' Dr. Hueffer, by good luck, implicitly refutes himself by the remainder of his own sentence. That identity, he says, was fully understood by Dante, 'who was what every lyrical poet by rights should be—a musician.' Consequently, not a single modern lyricist of eminence has been 'what he by rights should be,' and we are left to lament the barbarous harshness of Goethe's, Shelley's, Victor Hugo's, Lord Tennyson's, and Mr. Swinburne's best verses.

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Music consists in the fusion of an order of this sort with an order of another sort—that of sounds in respect of pitch. The product is as different from each of its components as water is different from oxygen and hydrogen; but an ear will not appreciate the product unless it has the power of realising each of the components separately—just as an eye would not appreciate the shape of an object unless it could so move as to perceive the height and the breadth of it separately. Thus no amount of perception of rhythm or time-order will help a person to appreciate melodic shapes, unless his ear is also sensitive to the other order, in the sense of instinctively perceiving the distances and pitch-relations of the notes that compose it. It is natural to take sensitiveness to *pitch* as the test of 'a musical ear,' for the reason that the pitch-element is exclusively a concern of the ear, whereas rhythmic stimulation can be appreciated also by the senses of sight, touch, and muscular motion; but it is, of course, only because a sufficient sensitiveness to the time-element may be taken for granted, that an ear thus endowed is 'musical' in the sense of understanding and remembering tunes. Now this gift of 'a musical ear,' though even the perfection of it is very common, is by no means

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universal; and it is as totally unconnected with any other mental or bodily attribute as long sight. Even this brief description of it will suffice to show both how an ear may be (as it frequently is) at once delicately sensitive to the charm of verse-effects and inappreciative of Music; and also why the satisfaction obtainable from sounds ordered by rhythm only—as in a performance on the drum, or in verse as tested by presentation in an unknown tongue—must be infinitely slight in comparison with the complete pleasure obtainable from Music.

It may possibly be objected that in this latter conclusion I am overlooking certain artistic elements in the sound of verse beyond the rhythmic—namely, alliteration and skilful arrangement of vowel sounds. But, immensely as these elements often contribute to the total effect of good verse, experiments with a person ignorant of the language will again show how inconspicuous and uncertain is any abstract effect that they are capable of producing on the ear. Thus tested, the amount of pleasure which the artistic introduction of them in verse will add to the sensuous impression producible by the reading of ordinary prose, or of verse in which no such special art has been employed, will prove to be a negligible quantity.

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It seems, then, quite impossible to hold that the marked difference of effect between imaginative verse and imaginative prose should be accounted for by the mere addition of the ear-pleasure of the sound to the mind-pleasure of the sense, and to regard the complete message of Poetry as just the sum of these two pleasures. Equally impossible is it to doubt that the presence of this sound-element is essential to the total effect; for the form, as distinct from the matter, of Poetry consists in nothing else. We are thus driven to recognise that the effect is in some way not a *sum* but a *product* of its elements; so that if we reckon the imaginative pleasure alone as 100, and the sound-pleasure alone as 5, the resulting pleasure is not 105, but 500. But the better metaphor is that of chemical compounds. The off-hand notion is that, as Poetry consists of sense and sound, the pleasure which is not due to the sense must be due to the sound; but if we call the sense 'oxygen' and the sound 'nitrogen,' the intoxicating effect is obtained, not by *mixing* the two constituents, as in air, but by *combining* them, as in laughing-gas. Our 'non-reasonable element,' thus regarded, is not an element proper but a *reaction*, in which the nature



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of the constituents, as known in separation, is quite transformed. The point is one which might well be emphasised for its scientific (apart from its artistic) interest. For this sort of combination, this veritable *psycho-chemistry*, has not been nearly enough recognised in psychology; and the cases where it occurs need to be noted and marked off from the very common cases where impressions are simply summed—as, for instance, when I eat my dinner at a window commanding a fine view. In the case of verse, the reaction is probably of an exceptionally complicated sort; but some attempt can be made to divine its most general conditions.

In the first place, then, verse-rhythm in words is the imposition of a *sensible* order on what naturally and normally has only a *logical* order; and there is piquancy in the feeling that so little is this ideal control a fettering incident, that each order seems to gain verve and spontaneity from the other, or rather from the latent sense that the other, though present and operative, is powerless to hamper it. Much more important, however, is it to notice how the sense that one single thing —the word-series—is lending itself to this joint dominance may take the form of a sort of trans-

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figured surprise.[1] For our normal experience of language throughout our lives has taught us to regard it as simply a set of symbols whereby ideas are conveyed from one mind to another; and not once in a million times, when we listen to a sentence, is there a thought of attending to the sound of it as such, or of regarding the ear as the organ primarily addressed, and not as a mere neutral channel through which the sense penetrates inwards. And conversely, when our ears are occupied with sound as such—whether in submission to the soothing influence of winds or streams or distant city-noises, or in observation of some rhythmically recurring stimulus, such as the ticking of a clock or the breaking of waves, or in attention to instrumental music, or even (we might often fairly add) to vocal music, considering how subordinate a feature the words there are apt to be, and how contentedly we resign ourselves to not distinguishing them—there is no thought of looking beyond the hearing faculty or of regarding the

[1] The root-principle here involved is the old one of 'unity in variety'—the *single* line of words, 'dominated at once by the idea which they express in their grammatical connection and by their metrical adjustment,' clearly possessing *two* independent functions or aspects. See the fuller discussion of 'The Sound-element in Verse' in chap. xix. of *The Power of Sound*.



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sounds as symbols of a logical idea. Therefore when, as in verse, the sounds are pointedly addressed *both* to the ear and to the understanding, the rarity of the combination of aspects contributes a strain of feeling partly akin to that with which we follow an exhibition of skill, and partly to that with which we receive an unexpected gratuity. There can be no doubt that this sense of rarity, though of course not isolated or brought prominently into consciousness, has none the less a very pervading share in the transfiguring influence.

Nor is this all. Rhythm perpetually not only transfigures the poetical expression of an idea, but makes the existence of that expression possible. This is tolerably obvious in the case of what is often called *par excellence* poetical language—language which keeps clear of prosaic homeliness and prosaic precision and of technical and abstract terms, and confines itself to a more picturesque and loftier vocabulary. Prose, of course, makes a similar selection in certain cases, but only when deliberately adopting a peculiar tone; only in special instances should we expect 'chamber' rather than 'room,' or 'passing' rather than 'very.' But verse, even quite simple verse, can keep continuously on this level of exclusiveness, and there

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are, moreover, many abbreviations and inflections (such as *'tis* and *'twas*, *thou* and *ye* for *you*, *th* for *s* in the third person singular) which have in them nothing ornate, but which are now almost confined to verse, and are there in constant use. Clearly it is the rarity of rhythmic, as compared with non-rhythmic, speech that supports such rarity of poetic as compared with non-poetic diction; that is to say, verse, being in one respect—namely, its effect on the ear—a marked exception from ordinary language, thereby establishes for itself the means of being exceptional, without seeming unnatural, in other ways. Verse-rhythm supplies the condition which allows us to welcome as a matter of course the continuous assumption of a dignified style, and forestalls the inquiry, which in prose we should be perpetually making, as to its particular fitness at each point in turn. But the influence I mean extends far beyond these facilities for the use of lofty and so-called 'poetical' diction. We shall best see this by an instance. Consider the following quatrain of Wordsworth's:—

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

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All will admit the rare charm of the second couplet; and, while noting the beautiful alliteration and the balanced cadence of the closing syllables in either line, we still readily distinguish the repeated words 'that is' as the poetical key-note—as the point in the lines which gives them their special rarity. And the very fact that the words in question are not ornate or 'poetical,' but of the humblest and most mechanical sort, makes the instance a crucial one for our purpose. By these humblest parts of speech the poet with a single touch makes the silence and the sleep seem part of the inmost and eternal nature of the sky and the hills—as it were a perpetual brooding presence in them. 'Yes,' it will be said, 'but that is a piece of poetic imagination. How is the rhythm as such in any way answerable for it?' In this way—that the influence of those little words on the mind, the fulness of their sense, depends on their *sound* occurring where it does, as an integral portion of two successive line of definite and equal length and structure. Their importance, their power to bear naturally the weight of suggestion which we have attributed to them, result from their being built into the fabric of the rhythmic organism, so that the ear could not

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possibly dispense with them. It is the attraction and attention of the ear to their bodily presence that endows them with a potential dignity unusual in words so small and colourless ; and thus endowed they swell in the complete sentence to the capacity of real imaginative significance. Should the charm be found in some faint measure to survive, even after the lines have been rendered into prose by alterations of their other parts, it will be because even then the marked parallelism of clauses, and the repetition of those two words at the same place in each, cannot help striking the ear with somewhat of a rhythmic effect. Destroy the last remnant of this by isolating one of the clauses, as, 'He had found a daily teacher in the sleep that is among the lonely mountains ;' and even if the expression be found natural, for me, at any rate, the magic, and with it the fulness of significance, have vanished.

I am well aware how ponderous and repulsive such handling as this of any delicate poetical beauty must appear ; and also how dangerous it is to rely on examples, the choice and treatment of which may be attributed to some idiosyncrasy of taste. But I can at least reply that the very clumsiness and inadequacy of words is so far

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evidence in support of an argument which would vindicate the place in Poetry of what lies beyond the domain of words; while as for idiosyncrasies of taste—or, at any rate, such measure of them as produces in various groups of persons various special perceptions of beauty, unshared, or only partially shared, by others—they are precisely what I here maintain to be inevitable, and what I am arguing to show that criticism far too little recognises.

But we can penetrate a little further still into the mysteries of our 'non-reasonable' element. We have assumed without difficulty that poetical ideas and sentiments, as resting ultimately on facts of real experience, are just that part in Poetry which lies within the range, not only of reasonable discussion, but in large measure even of proof. But this applies to ideas and sentiments only as embodied in complete propositions. Now of course Poetry, like all other uses of developed language, consists of such propositions; but the smaller elements of which the propositions are formed, the *single words* and single smallest combinations of words, perpetually assume in Poetry a quite unique independence of interest. This may be stated as a matter of the commonest experience; and for

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once a really useful analogy may be found in the art where attempts at such analogies are the very beam in the eye of contemporary art-criticism. Every lover of Music knows the way in which his delight at some beautiful musical sentence will often seem to culminate at a particular point, in some special note or chord, the feeling for which I do not know how better to describe than as a desire to hug it as it passes. Now that note or chord would of course have no value alone; in isolation it would be of no more value than the tip of a nose broken off a statue, or a stone detached from a temple. Its effect depends on its place in an organic whole; and though we may often say, 'How beautiful that note or that chord is!' we see at once that it is the complete melodic sentence that is really beautiful, though the beauty may be more vividly realised at that point than at any other. Similarly in Poetry we find moments of culminating delight—

> All the charm of all the Muses
> Flowering often in a single word—

where one wants to 'hug' the unit in the same way; one cannot dwell on it enough or squeeze enough out of it. Similarly, too, we see that it is

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not the word itself that we can credit with the effects; we might look at it in the dictionary without any emotion. The single element, the word, like the note, is enabled to create this impression of a glory inherent in it only by its relation to surrounding elements and to the whole. As far as this, then, the resemblance of the two cases extends. But the word, though in detachment it could not move us as it does, may have, even in detachment, what the single note cannot have —a meaning and a multitude of associations of its own; and these enter into, though they could not alone engender, the special character just noticed. And, moreover, it lies in the very nature of language that a word may bear a far larger share of the whole meaning of a phrase, in comparison with the mechanical parts of speech that make the verbal cement for the leading words, than a single note can possibly bear in relation to the co-ordinate elements of a melodic form; so that the delusive impression that the glory of which we are conscious is inherent in the word itself is really here far less of a delusion than the similar impression in the case of the note. The word does really contain in itself a dim body of suggestiveness in excess of the amount that it is

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bound to contribute to the strict intelligibility of the particular sentence; and when we dwell on it and mentally 'hug' it in the way that I have noticed, all this individuality is brought vividly home to us as part of the feeling. And here it becomes evident how truly the nameless, the unanalysable charm of the best Poetry is bound up with its representative, and not solely with its presentative or musical, element. For everything that enters into the meaning and association even of a single word is of course in nature representative; though the associations may be so diffused and intangible, and may have gathered together so insensibly from innumerable sources in life and literature, that at the moment of the word's occurrence their presence may be felt only as an emotional atmosphere surrounding the nucleus of more tangible meaning. And the more any sentence as a whole is charged with poetical significance, the more will this individual significance of particular words in it make itself felt. It is as though the elements yielded the fulness of their separate glory only to the master who can create for them a further glory in their union.

'But,' it may be said, 'this peculiarity in the imaginative and poetic use of words seems to carry

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us beyond the sphere of verse; for prose also has proved capable of transcending reason, and of making separate words and expressions flash on us with unwonted and inexplicable life.' Now, in dwelling on the non-reasonable part in poetical beauty, I am in no way committed to the assertion that all its constituents are excluded from prose, but only to the assertion that the metrical form makes a difference of kind. It cannot be for nothing that the very idea of 'poetical prose' inspires dread; and the instances of prose-writing where we find delight of the intangible and non-reasonable kind are exceptions that only prove the rule. One has but to test by self-examination the living force of words in a specimen of verse and of poetical prose which may respectively seem to oneself first-rate of their kind. For such typical passages may often be regarded as fairly on a par in respect of the ideas and emotions which they reasonably express; and the prose may unquestionably further resemble the poetry in a certain subtle individuality of life in its more prominent words, so far as this life can be quickened in them by the idea itself, aided by such qualities of sound-arrangement as are possible apart from metre. So far the poetical merits of the respective passages may be equal;

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yet only one of them is Poetry. I hesitate to exemplify what to many must seem so obvious. But as poetical prose may have received scant justice in the prose-versions of Poetry above given, let us take just one example of another sort—an example of original prose-expression and original verse-expression of the same topic, and one, moreover, where every association of authorship and context is to the advantage of the prose, while the verse is in itself none of the highest. The picture in the *Vita Nuova* of the ardour of childish love loses little in Miss Rossetti's beautiful translation :—

> Almost at the beginning of her ninth year she appeared to me, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year. And she appeared to me clothed in a most noble colour—a subdued and decorous crimson; girdled and adorned in such wise as was suitable to her most youthful age. Thenceforward Love swayed my soul, which was even then espoused to him; and began to assume over me so great and so assured a lordship, empowered thereto in virtue of my imagination, that I must needs perform to the full all his pleasures. He oftentimes commanded me to seek to behold this youngest angel; wherefore I, in my boyhood, many times sought her out, and saw her so noble and laudable in bearing, that certes of her might be spoken that word of the poet Homer: She appeared not to be made by any mortal man, but by God.

A moving description, truly, even if we knew

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nothing of the author's history; yet if my readers had been suddenly asked what words have most lingered in their ears as the incarnation of childish romance, how many of them would have recited this passage? They may say that they recalled it, but had forgotten the exact expressions. Quite so; but it is just in virtue of 'exact expressions' that Poetry is magical. And that being the case, might not the magic strain required rather be—

> It was many and many a year ago,
> In a kingdom by the sea,
> That a maiden there lived, &c.—

where the romance steals upon us even before the nominative of the sentence is reached? Edgar Allan Poe's emotions were to Dante's as a petulant hill-torrent to a majestic river; but verse is verse, and its relation to *our* emotions admits of no substitute.

> *I* was a child and *she* was a child
> In this kingdom by the sea;
> But we loved with a love that was more than love,
> I and my Annabel Lee;
> With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven
> Coveted her and me.

So it is. Language, which in prose does little more than transmit thought, like clear glass, becomes—

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even as that becomes—by art's adjustments and the moulding of measured form, a lens, where the thought takes fire as it passes. The poet speaks through a medium which seems to intensify the point and to extend the range of what he would tell us by some power outside his own volition. Such a power, in fact, a rhythmic order, in its fundamental appeal to human nerves, literally is.

And we may now push a stage further our attempt, not to *analyse*, but to *localise* the secret whereby an abstract order of sound, the radical conditions of which differ from everything else in a poet's work by their physical basis and independent existence, gets wrought into the very tissue of his thought. Having noticed how the perception of words in their metrical aspect, as indispensable parts of a scheme of sound, may give them a prominence and importance that reacts on their meaning, we might guess how intimately this same feature in metre would associate itself with our more recent point—with that individuality of particular words and combinations whereby their significance seems to overflow that which in their logical coherence they convey. And so indeed it proves to be: the *ictus* of the verse comes upon us as the operative force which shocks the words into

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their unwonted life. And what is more, this life reacts on the rhythm itself in its merely physical aspect. The physical effect which, as produced by a drum or by verse in an unknown tongue, we found so deficient in independent æsthetic power, is found to have undergone such a transformation that the impulse to yield to it, to let one's inner sense rock and sway with it, to give it its full effect by the voice or actually to mark it by movements of the body, is increased a hundred-fold. Any one who is susceptible to verse may verify this in the most convincing way, if he will learn by ear a few choice lines in some language unknown to him, and then, next time he finds himself repeating over in the *abandon* of solitude some favourite passage of verse, will recite the other in immediate juxtaposition. The physical drop will be as evident as the intellectual; no emphasis given to the rhythm of the uncomprehended words will stir, in anything approaching its full strength, the nervous impulse to responsive motion.

One further point may conclude this necessary, though, I fear, most unattractive, part of our subject. In considering the total contribution of metre to imaginative language, it is impossible to overlook the quality of *permanence*. I do not

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mean permanence merely in the sense that metrical words live in the memory, and that of the correct quotations which could be obtained at any time out of the whole range of literature (putting aside anything that has been deliberately taught or systematically repeated) the number of sentences in verse would be to those in prose as 1000 to 1. This is, of course, a most important fact; but I am here dealing only with elements of effect that enter into the actual moment of enjoyment. How a feeling of permanence may rank in art as such an element is most prominently exemplified in Architecture. In the awe produced by the size and strength of a mighty building, the most casual analysis will detect backward and forward glances to the changing generations among whom it has stood and will stand unchanged. In the case of Poetry the feeling is subtler, and has little such direct relation to actual survival among men. But we have only to refer to what was said above on the rarity of Poetry in the world, as compared with prose, and to remember the transience which is so proverbial a quality of language in general—*ἔπεα πτερόεντα*—to see how naturally the exceptional presentation will connect itself with exceptional durability,—how the occasional bestowal of



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art on the fashioning of what normally is unfashioned, and dies as soon as uttered, cannot but suggest the purpose and power of making it live. And while some measure of the effect may be traced in any language, whether verse or prose, where art has markedly presided at the choice and arrangement of words, yet here again we shall find the quintessence of it in the distinctly metrical quality of verse. It is a sense of combined parts, and their indispensableness one to another, which gives us a sense of permanence in an arch as compared with a casual heap of stones; it is a similar indispensableness which gives to metrical language an air of permanence impossible even to the most harmonious sentence whose sounds conform to no genuine scheme. And again, in the case of this constituent as of the others, we have no difficulty in seeing that its influence is really a joint one of sound and sense—that, though founded in the nature of metrical sound as such, it is not merely a sound-quality superposed *ab extra* on the intelligible beauty of the words, but depends for its existence on their intelligible character. None would derive the same impression of permanence from nonsense verses, or even from trivial verses, however metrically moulded. The idea conveyed

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must seem worthy of being carved out in durable material, for the durability itself to get any noticeable æsthetic character. We cannot glory in the enshrining for memory of things that we do not care to remember. But for that which is of true spiritual significance the fairly-fitted body of sound is greeted as the inevitable investiture; and thus justified and quickened, the strength of the mutually indispensable parts seems no longer that of mere structure but of organic life.

So much, then, for our non-reasonable element. It has detained us so long that I will defer to the next Essay the further study of its close connection with varieties of taste. Meanwhile, what has been said of it, if at all true, will invalidate a good many plausible axioms about Poetry. What can look more sound than Mr. Austin's definition of the art as 'a transfiguration or imaginative representation of life in verse or rhythm?' Yet if this does not say, it assuredly implies, that the rhythmic qualities lie outside the imaginative qualities, and are superposed on them; it suggests no sort of reaction or interaction, producing quite new qualities. But the gist of the matter is that the imaginative or the transfiguring power of what is most genuinely



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Poetry cannot be at all completely judged apart from the actual rhythmic presentation; that the union of the elements goes to the very root of the imaginative process; that the essential difference between the most imaginative prose writer (who is nothing more) and the imaginative poet is not a technical one, not a matter of a more or less striking mode of presentation for their ideas, but extends to the nature of the imagination itself, and to the inmost essence of the things it finds to tell us. For, however much common ground there may be to the two, the imagination of the genuine poet has always the distinctive quality that images and ideas perpetually spring up in it, not only demanding rhythmic expression—though that is true, and that is much—but actually clothed, or rather embodied, in rhythm. Not of course at first in all the amplitude of their rhythmic life, nor in any very prolonged flow—that is a piece of luck for now and then, luck, however, of the sort that only comes to one who deserves it—but in phrases that, flashing at once into their place in the metrical scheme, light up the path for others to follow; in word-fragments and line-fragments, which, even before they come in sight of their ultimate combination, are yearning and struggling towards it, and

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even as they enter their diviner's mind, are instinct with the presage of the fuller glory to which they tend. But it is doubly useless, in a case where the complete result, which we can all sit and contemplate, defies adequate description, to beat about for words to describe the shifting and subtle processes that lead up to it.

And now, suppose the limitations of reasoning criticism to be agreed to. Suppose it granted that reasonable grounds may very well suffice to class for us Milton and Southey, or Shakespeare and Addison; but hardly Byron and Shelley, or Rossetti and Browning. It may still be asked—Does the critic really produce no effect beyond that of reasoned exposition? Is his influence wholly limited to the ground which his logical advocacy covers? To assert this would be greatly to underrate his functions. What he cannot do by argument he can most assuredly often do by *infection* —by the contagious influence on the minds of others of a more vivid view and a more concentrated pleasure. It is easy to disparage this sort of unreasoned influence as producing a second-hand and vicarious admiration, which cannot have the genuineness of the original article. But such

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disparagement seems very shallow. The effect is not that the influenced person consciously exerts himself to see or hear with the eyes or ears of another, but that, his attention being sympathetically fascinated, the electric contact (so to speak) is made for him, and his own eyes and ears are brought steadily to bear on beauties which they might otherwise have passed over. Surely we must all have had this brought home to us again and again even through the simplest of all means—that of quotation. A passage standing out alone, put forward by some one as what to him, at any rate, has been peculiarly or characteristically impressive, will often get from that mere fact a new sort of place in our regard, and will strike us when we meet it again in its place with quite a new air of distinction. But the effect may go much beyond this. It is impossible to gainsay the testimony of those who find themselves now cherishing in the inmost sanctuary of their imagination, and brooding over with intensest personal affection, some treasure to which (even though it may have crossed their mental field of vision a score of times) access was first opened to them through the sheer reality of another's enthusiasm. Even on that non-reasonable and intuitive ground where there

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can be no definite instruction, and where it is supposed that the individual must do what he can with such instincts as nature has conferred on him, our lives are curiously intertwined with those of others; and for most of us the relation is really a very loose one between the amount which our emotional self proves able to contain and assimilate, and the amount which its unassisted feelers would suffice to supply to it. And this mutual helpfulness assumes quite unprecedented importance in an age like the present, when the multiplicity and dispersion of interests and pursuits makes systematic study of art or literature an impossibility to all but a small minority, and when the amount that a man may pick up by the way greatly depends on his alertness to be helped into quick *rapport* with the best that he can get.

And Poetry is, beyond doubt, the imaginative region where this contagious influence is most effective. Here, again, as in so many other ways, Music and Poetry, the two arts of the ear whose exceptional opportunities of union have led to a superstition as to their fundamental unity, occupy the two extremes of the scale. Music is, of course, unequalled as the art in the simultaneous appreciation of which numbers can unite, enhancing their

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enjoyment by so doing, and adding to its dignity by realisation of its social aspect. But here the power to appreciate, and the immediate susceptibility to the impression, are pre-supposed: the sympathy comes in as an augmentative, not as a revealing, influence. The essential impression of a musical sentence, apart from all extraneous associations, is a simple thing, is a thing as it were all of one piece, to be dwelt on in one way by the concentration on it of a quite independent and unique faculty. It may be pleasing to one musical hearer, displeasing or indifferent to another; but its simplicity and independence give it a hit-or-miss character. On sufficient acquaintance it either speaks or it does not speak; and the brooding over it on account of another's enthusiasm about it will hardly prove a means whereby latent potentialities of feeling about it are wakened into activity. It is in virtue of just the opposite characteristics in a poetical passage that the opposite result is produced. It is a complex, often even a Protean thing, and derives its character from, it may be, numerous strains of associations, playing through verbal and rhythmic combinations that seem to put on new aspects under our very eyes. Hence the constant chance of latent com-

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mon ground, the chance that the inspiring shock of sympathy with another's enthusiasm will supervene on elements of idea and emotion which were only waiting for that shock, to crystallise into the fullest and most characteristic poetical impression.

But to return to the influence itself: it is emphatically one which can never be brought to bear without tact and self-command in the expression of preferences. Just in proportion as we are ready to be infected with an intuitional delight, for which reasons cannot be assigned, are we resentful at having it thrust down our throats as a dogma. And such an offence in respect of matters of taste and instinct is far more trying than that basing of verdicts on grounds bound to be inadequate which was discussed before. Mr. Swinburne is here the most prominent offender, simply because his magnificent powers and his wonderfully vivid and delicate sense of beauty give him in this direction the most exceptional opportunities. As a critic he is never guilty of overlooking the non-reasonable element in verse. So profoundly impressed is he with the literal magic of the best poetry, that his remarks are even overapt to run rather into elaborately-worded descriptions of what pleases him than into such reasoned discussion as Mr.

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Arnold's or Mr. Austin's. We have almost a surfeit of poems 'fresh as dawn and fine as air,' or 'sovereignly faultless in form and colour of verse,' or with 'the odour and colour of cloudless air;' of 'ardent affluence of colour and strenuous dilation of spirit,' 'sweet and sovereign oppression of absolute beauty,' 'sweet and sovereign unity of perfect spirit and sense,' 'sovereignty of language and strong grasp of spirit,' 'solid and flawless excellence of jewels and setting,' 'abysses of luminous sound and sonorous light,' and so on. Still there is amply enough of what is true and beautiful in most of his descriptions to make it clear that he has a genuine *métier*, less as a reasoning than as an infectious critic. By what fatality, then, does he introduce at every turn expressions that inevitably awake an impulse of resistance? Why, instead of trusting his own persuasive powers, does he so constantly adopt the attitude of a man who is sure to be attacked, and who must, therefore, entrench himself every moment behind the very strongest words, so as to frighten or stultify his imaginary assailants beforehand?

And in all this, it is our old friend, or enemy, the instinct of classification, which is chiefly responsible. To possess this instinct in an altogether

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morbid degree is specially unfortunate for a critic who belongs, or should belong, to the infectious class. In spite of his disowning all desire 'to wrangle for the precedence of this immortal or of that,' orders of merit of one kind or another, expressed or implied, literally bristle on his pages, representing in literature the social offence which has earned for comparisons as a class their familiar attendant epithet.[1] As introduced by him, every

[1] I append a few specimens. 'All Mr. Rossetti's translations bear the same evidence of a power not merely beyond reach but beyond attempt of other artists in language.' François Victor Hugo's version of Shakespeare, and Urquhart's of Rabelais, 'may rank together in glorious rivalry beyond eyeshot of all past or future competition.' *Sister Helen* is 'out of all sight or comparison the greatest ballad in modern English.' In *Jenny* 'the purity and nobility of its high and ardent pathos are qualities of a moral weight and beauty beyond reach of any rivalry.' *The Vision of Judgment* is raised 'beyond comparison with any other satire.' *Kubla Khan* is 'the supreme model of music in our language, unapproachable except by Shelley.' 'For purity and volume of music Shelley is to Coleridge as a lark to a nightingale'—which may be true; but then in a note it is added, 'From this general rule I except of course the transcendent antiphonal music which winds up the *Prometheus*'—where the 'of course' is characteristically irritating. Shelley's version of the *Cyclops* displays 'matchless grace of unapproachable beauty'; and his superiority to Byron is admitted 'by all capable articulate creatures'—an instance of downright bullying. Shakespeare is 'the greatest, save one, of all poetic thinkers'; where the unexplained exception, suggestive of something which 'every schoolboy knows,' is a sort of passing buffet for the innocent reader. Any one of four special lyrics of Victor Hugo's would 'suffice to establish, beyond debate and beyond acclamation, the absolute sovereignty'

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case of excellence seems to come before us staggering under the weight of its relations to other cases. We never lose the feeling that it is being backed against something else, or something else against it—that some act of fealty is being demanded of it or for it; and though Mr. Swinburne is the last man deliberately to dwarf any greatness that he recognises, we tire of the way in which authors are hurried off, on any pretence, to make their genuflexions before one or another of his gods. In his company we lose the power of admiring our heroes directly and naturally; from the free citizenship of an intellectual republic we and they seem to pass to the slavery of a hierarchy, in which the rank of everybody and

&c., as though words could annul the fact of its having been both debated and disputed by many very capable judges. 'It ought to be, if it be not, superfluous to set down in words the assurance that we claim for no living poet a place beside the Master.' 'We have no poet comparable' to Mr. Arnold 'for power and perfection of landscape.' A hymn of Miss Rossetti's is 'so much the noblest of sacred poems in our language that there is none which comes near it enough to stand second.' Two odes of Keats are 'poems which for perfect apprehension and execution of all attainable in their own sphere would weigh down all the world of poetry.' And again, with regard to Keats we hear of 'that especial field of work where all the giants and all the gods of art would fail to stand against him for an hour. . . . There he is unapproachable; this is his throne, and he may bid all kings of song to come bow to it.' One need not differ very widely from these dicta to smart under the ill-usage of their style.

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everything is as precisely assigned as in the ritual of some Eastern religion, and no one can walk for bowings and scrapings. The very mention of a poet or of a poem seems to imply for him a sense of their place, accurately fixed by a combative examiner, in about twenty different triposes. So great is the air of exactitude which, with the turn of a phrase, Mr. Swinburne can give to his class-lists, and so multifarious are the aspects and qualities in respect of which works and workers are classed, that the reader's endeavours to adjust his judgment resemble a perpetual process of pulling and wrenching. Nor can one ever be sure when one is at the end of this Procrustean process. One never knows what new department of excellence may not at any moment crop up, in which some poet will turn out to be 'out of all sight or comparison' superior to all his compeers, except, 'of course,' this, that, or the other of them.

Gentler methods would surely be in every way an advantage; for this exaggeration of positiveness and detailed precision in undemonstrable matters not only weakens the force of the judgments, by suggesting that they would never have been thus pronounced had not their author felt that they were bound to be differed from, but actually

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prompts the difference. Mr. Swinburne has himself remarked on the falseness of the verdicts which great artists have not infrequently passed on one another; and in so doing he has admitted, as completely as his general tone denies, the justice of our main conclusion, that even among 'capable articulate creatures' there is a large amount of *necessary* divergence of intuition in Poetry. But our argument will yield a further corollary, of which he, of all others, should reap the benefit—namely, that one who at any point perceives and enjoys more than others establishes a claim not so much to be differed from as envied by them. This truth, which lies at the very root of the infectious influence of mind on mind, might perhaps help most of us here and there to a slight though salutary lift in each other's estimation; but Mr. Swinburne in particular, should he realise it, might make his wonderful range of poetic insight and sympathy contribute almost as much to our admiration of him as (what he cares far more about) our admiration for the many objects of his generous and enthusiastic praise. And the first condition—to give the keynote of this Essay its final due—would be to strike a pen through nine out of every ten of his comparatives and superlatives.

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## *THE APPRECIATION OF POETRY.*

WE were mainly occupied in the last Essay with the nature of what I called 'the non-reasonable element' in Poetry, and its distinction from the merely musical element with which it is often identified. This alternative was put: that the complete result of any Poetry which moves us in the most distinctive way—*i.e.* in the way which most distinguishes Poetry from prose—either is or is not something more than the effect producible by the *sense*, as expressed in unmetrical language, *plus* the extremely slight pleasure producible by the mere metrical *sound* in itself, as tested for instance in an unknown tongue. To express the alternative in another way—if any passage of Poetry which we select as characteristically impressive be deprived of its metre, the change is felt in one of two ways: either as a change of sound, merely defrauding the bodily organ, or as entailing a loss beyond that of the bodily organ. If there are any

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persons who feel it only in the former way, which may be doubted, there are large numbers who feel it in the latter, and who would be entitled by their larger perception to hold the others defective in distinctive feeling for Poetry.

The chief conclusion to which this remarkable fact led us was that the combination of the elements of sound and sense has a *transfiguring* influence, whereby the final result is made quite other than our knowledge of the respective elements could have taught us to expect; and that therefore the transfiguring power of Poetry, and the distinctively poetical imagination, cannot be confined in their operation to one of the elements—namely, the sense—nor identified with any imaginative power which might be revealed in prose, but must embrace the whole of the distinctively poetical result. However large a part of the imaginative virtue still survives, in company with the logical meaning, when a poem is rendered in an unmetrical version, yet if (as we have agreed) the loss thereby entailed extends beyond the sensory organ, there is no escape from the admission that with the sensory element of the metre vanishes a genuine part of the imaginative or supersensory quality. This is the part that I have felt justified in

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calling the most distinctively poetical part of Poetry; and the power of an individual to produce it may be equally fairly called the distinctively poetical imagination. Moreover, since the very essence of the result lies in combination, we found it but natural to infer that this distinctively poetical imagination—this instinct for sound and sense in combination—presides, like an inscrutable principle of chemical affinity, at the very earliest stages of the poetical or combining process; an inference which the facts of composition abundantly confirm. And the more all this is realised, the more profound will be our admiration of the poetic power. For even if we have to some extent succeeded in analysing the effect, we have nowhere penetrated to its genesis; its elements are already combined even in the rudest germ which reveals poetic potentialities. The magic—or, if we prefer it, the genius—which brings them together remains as inscrutable to us after all our analysis, and as little derivable from anything else that we know of, as the principle of chemical affinity itself; and we are no more likely to reduce genius to rules than to build up living tissue in a laboratory.

The first consequence of this view was seriously to invalidate all definitions of the nature and



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function of Poetry, regarded as canons for producing unanimity in our comparative estimates of poets. And in the present Essay, which aims at yet further liberalising and delimitising the conditions of poetic appreciation, I shall have yet further to enforce the close connection of our non-reasonable element with varieties of taste. It might be a non-reasonable but still a *constant* element; in reality, I believe that it is the *inconstant* element *par excellence*. Nor are the diversities of susceptibility with regard to it diversities of degree only, some persons being keenly alive to it in a multitude of cases and others affected by it comparatively slightly and rarely; but of kind, in the sense that those who are keenly alive to it in particular places exhibit no certain correspondence as to those places, A feeling it strongly where B feels it weakly, and *vice versâ*; so that estimates in which it is operative must always be in some measure idiosyncratic.

In trying to account for this, a word must first be said respecting one very powerful influence, which may fairly be called non-reasonable, though standing so far apart from the other constituents of the non-reasonable element that I purposely kept it out of the preceding discussion. I mean

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that most general bent of a person's mental habit, that natural affinity for this rather than that region of ideas and emotions in the broadest sense, which goes far deeper than any assignable grounds, and can as little be argued about or called in question as a characteristic love of contemplation or love of action. I do not pretend that such a bent is universal; and, moreover, when we get away from the very most fundamental cast of imagination we soon shade into the reasonable region; there is no difficulty, for instance, in assigning grounds why *Marmion* should be specially admired by a schoolboy, and the *Christian Year* by an Anglican clergyman, and Horace's Satires by a cultivated diner-out. But a greater susceptibility to dramatic than to lyric Poetry or *vice versâ*, exceptional satisfaction or dissatisfaction in Shelley or Mrs. Browning, a decided opinion on the relative merits of *Childe Harold* and *In Memoriam*, may all depend on a mental hue too native and pervading to be seizable or to offer points either for attack or defence. Of course this sort of bent, even where there is no doubt of its influence, in itself supplies a mere vague ground on which the distinctly enjoyable elements can play: a person, *e.g.*, whose imagination takes the reflective turn will not, or should not, admire verse simply



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for being reflective. But, given the other conditions, the general bent may become operative, and involve special capacities and special incapacities for the enjoyment of first-rate work in this or that direction.

We get on more difficult ground when we try to realise personal predilections in relation to those more precise features of the non-reasonable element which were exhibited in the last Essay. Without doubt the power of special words and phrases to seem charged with an emotional force beyond what their logical connexion would imply—'*cette sorcellerie*' (to quote M. de Banville) '*grâce à laquelle des idées nous sont nécessairement communiquées d'une manière certaine par des mots qui cependant ne les expriment pas*'—has some relation to a particular intuition of language in the person so affected by them; for another person, of equal general susceptibility to verse, may be fully appreciative of the sense expressed by the words, and yet not be similarly affected. But this intuition of language, both in itself and in its history, is beyond our power of analysis. We can never unravel the infinitely subtle methods in which any individual's relation to his own language, or more precisely, the connection of its

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words with things as they exist for him, has come to be exactly what it is. The process can be as little scrutinised as the gradual formation of tissue in the living body. But even among the most similar persons we seem to discern wide differences, if not in the actual connotation, at any rate in what may be called the *atmosphere* of words. The simplest case of all is the one where there may be said to be no connotation, but only atmosphere—the case of *proper names*. Every one who has taken part in comparisons of 'favourite names' by a group of people must have observed both how large is the amount of disagreement, and how frequently preferences and aversions fail to be accounted for by the association of the name with a particular bearer of it either in fact or fiction; and further, how little of certain reference the predilections have to true beauty of abstract sound. As bits of sound, *Sophia* and *Maria*, which are certainly unpopular names, should stand high, and *Madge* low; nor could a Russian ignorant of English be at all trusted to pronouce *Naud* and *Mellie* inferior in sound to *Maud* and *Nellie*. This alone shows that words may have a sort of individuality which neither their definite suggestions nor their sound will completely account for. And

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though the possession by some words of a large amount of unmistakable connotation may much disguise the fact, many of them do yet undoubtedly present the same peculiarity as proper names, in a genuine but variously felt atmosphere. The variety is doubtless due in part to accidents of individual experience, and to remote and forgotten influences; but as the mind, with its native capacities, has been present as a selecting and organising influence through all the interactions of experience and language, native varieties of mind would certainly entail varieties in the intuition of language, even in persons whose environment and education had been entirely similar.

The result is that the language, which as a set of symbolic sounds is the same for all, really corresponds to sets of symbolised things which, could one person ever view more than one of them, would seem as various as the individuals in whose several minds they exist. Our individuality is in fact represented in that which our native tongue is and does for each of us—in that particular world of things, not quite the same as any other, which a given set of sound-symbols summons up before each of us. If we could figure the significations of the words of a language as spread out in a sort of

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superficies, occupying areas and connected by lines among themselves in correspondence with the impression that they make on any particular mind, and could then compare various specimens of such symbolic diagrams by Euclid's simple method of applying one to another, we should be struck in all directions by the crossings and deviations and excrescences and overlappings. Such an imaginary diagram may further help us to realise that words with their meanings, as they exist in any one's mind, are not a mere heterogeneous medley such as we find in a dictionary; but that each has its points and degrees of association with a number of others, even in their aspect as mere potential elements not yet wrought together into logical sentences. Hence the affinity or want of affinity between mind and mind in respect of them means, not just that a word here or there happens to have obtained the same or a different connotation or atmosphere for each; but that there is for them up to a certain point a similarity or dissimilarity in the *complexion of the language*, which may reappear in all sorts of combinations. And the idea of this chameleon-like character in words or their shortest combinations may be carried on (though I will not attempt the baffling task of further expressing it) to those

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less definite characters of phrase and style, our instinct for which must have been formed in even subtler and less direct ways. And if this be so, we may surely recognise in that heightened force and transfiguring atmosphere, which may belong to separate words or turns of expression in imaginative verse, just the condition to give varieties of verbal intuition the best chance of revealing themselves. For poets are the people for whom intuition of language, the *meanings* of words as taken to include both connotation and atmosphere, are most rich and vivid—for whom that which corresponds to language, that which for each of them is his one known world of objects and ideas, has most individuality. In the effect of their work on others, therefore, it might be expected that varieties of individual susceptibility to language would be brought out with special distinctness—not by that part of the work (perhaps by far the larger part) which admits of tolerably complete criticism, but by that smaller body of verse wherein is included whatever produces on any of us in any eminent degree the distinctively magical effect of Poetry.

Examples crowd on the mind ; but it is just in verse of this highest kind that, according to our view of the magical effect as resulting from a

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transfigurative *combination* of elements, the influence of any *particular* element is hardest to trace and define. Thus we shall more readily find our evidence in that sort of poetical beauty where the peculiar force and atmosphere of words, if not displayed in its highest efficiency, is yet displayed most clearly, because with least admixture of reasonable pleasure from the ideas expressed. Such beauty may be sought either in the class of poetry often disparaged as 'sound without sense,' of which the first stanza of *Jabberwocky* is an extreme example; or in the fragments of verse—a very large amount, could they be added together—one of which will haunt one of us, and another another, with a charm and persistency that seem unrelated, or at least very disproportionate, to their precise meaning. 'Sound without sense,' by the way, is a very delusive phrase, for as *mere* sound we have sufficiently seen how little power the most sonorous words have to produce any thrilling æsthetic effect.[1]

[1] I regret that I did not read Mr. T. Watts's masterly article on 'Poetry' (*Encycl. Brit.*) in time to discuss his different view on this point in the preceding Essay. He seems to me greatly to exaggerate the independent possibilities of verbal sound. 'Sappho's passion,' he says, 'is expressed so completely by the mere sound of her verses that a good recitation of them to a person ignorant of Greek would convey something of that passion to the listener'; and again: 'Poe's *Ulalume*, properly intoned, would produce something

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The 'sense' intended is sense for the reason, sense of the coherent sort which would justify itself as in some degree worth saying if said in prose; but this may be absent, as in the *Jabberwocky* stanza, or present only to a very moderate extent, as in *Kubla Khan*, and yet an atmosphere of suggestiveness be left to the words which cannot but be included in their sense, if 'sense' and 'sound' are meant to sum up all their qualities. The atmosphere and suggestiveness in any verse which haunts us in the way described seems to exhibit in a very undiluted form the element which we have

like the same effect upon a listener knowing no word of English as it produces upon us.' The matter is one purely of experiment; and the person on whom the experiment is tried ought, of course, not to receive the slightest clue as to the meaning or authorship of the words, or even as to whether it was poetry admired by the reciter or only doggerel. I have seen foreigners of literary tastes, but ignorant of English, simply amused by what seemed to them the sing-song of fine English verse properly enough 'intoned.' I am certain that, if due precautions were taken, ''Twas brillig' &c., or 'the Jumblies' would impress such persons quite as much as *Ulalume*, and that they could be made to detect some of the passion of Sappho in many a Greek prize-poem, if not in the *Needy Knife-grinder*; in short, that there is no limit to the 'sells' of which they would readily become the victims. But even were it possible to point to a few exceptional *tours de force*, my view would hold good in respect of Poetry in general. Language has got much too far away from its origin in the emotional cry, for its symbols to produce by their abstract sound-arrangements any certain emotional colouring; and even the slight suggestiveness possible to such arrangements can just as easily contradict as conform to the sense—as shown in almost any good parody.

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been examining. If, then, great varieties are observable in this particular region of effect—if what insists in running in A's head is found quite unarresting by B, and *vice versâ*—we have just the proof we want of the different appeal of language, even apart from its professed meaning, to different minds. Now I believe that experience will show a specially wide variety of experience in this precise direction. The experiences do not figure much in print, because from their very nature they can only be stated, and not discussed or defended. It is rather in chance conversation or snatches of quotation that one discovers how many private analogies there are to that 'rich Virgilian rustic measure,' whose 'ballad burden music' sounded in Tennyson's inward ear during a whole day's drive, to be afterwards celebrated in one of his own most memory-haunting poems. And this power of words, which we trace readily when we get it thus more or less in abstraction, assuredly will not cease to exist, however impossible it may be to make it separately evident, in the more complete poetic effect where it is fused with an independently impressive meaning.

And now let us pass to another topic—to what is considered especially the domain of the *ear*—the recognition of verse as more or less 'musical'—

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though that term (as we have seen) cannot be for a moment confined to the mere abstract sound, so poor and monotonous in sensuous quality, but includes something of the style and grammatical flow, if not of the actual meaning, of the language. And here again, amid very wide agreement, striking differences of instinct reveal themselves, harder, perhaps, to account for than any others. Differences of degree one would, of course, be prepared for, and they are of the utmost importance in comparative estimates of poets. For a person whose ear is not discriminative will make his estimate of the result irrespectively of one of its elements, and may thus easily judge a poem, the whole effect of which, as in all the truest Poetry, depends on the fusion of sound and sense, to be inferior to another in which the sound-constituent has had little or no vital share. A person who is more interested in some vigorous abortion of Mr. Walt Whitman's than in Mr. Swinburne's *Garden of Proserpine* may easily fail to see where Shelley is superior to Byron. But there is a difference beyond this obvious one of degree—a difference in the *quality* of the sensibility to verbal music, best exemplified by its producing in one person satisfaction or dissatisfaction with lines or passages which affect

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another in the contrary way. Of course, it is always open to any one who encounters disagreement on a question of this kind—especially if it take the form of indifference to something that to him seems a flaw—to regard it as a sign of a less sensitive ear; but when he finds other places where the position is reversed, and especially when there is also an immense amount of common ground where the two parties vie in the keenness of their appreciation, this view becomes hard to maintain. He would be a bold man who should assert that he possesses an ear more sensitive to the music of verse than Mr. Swinburne's; yet a good many of us will certainly go to our graves believing ourselves right in asserting, and Mr. Swinburne wrong in denying, that Lord Tennyson's ear is, and always has been, almost infallible; and that so far from his work having been, as Mr. Swinburne asserts, laboriously made musical by long years of labour, there never has been verse more naturally and variously instinct with the musical magic. As a set-off, we, or let me say I, believe, and even perceive, that Mr. Swinburne detects melody which gives him genuine delight in places where my ear is deaf to it, and that he is thereby immensely the gainer.

The point marks a curious difference from Music

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proper. There, of course, the widest differences of taste exist; but the occasions are extremely rare where there could be any dispute between educated musicians on a question of technical correctness—as rare as the occasions where educated *litterateurs* would be at issue on a question of grammar. Not one page in a thousand of published music contains a downright blunder. It is true that Music often sinks into incoherence and formlessness through neglect of metrical conditions; but even in the most random recitative, where this neglect goes further than would be possible in anything recognisable as verse, the notes, as figured on music-paper, profess to be arranged in bars of equal length, and to have definite proportional time-values, as to which there is no dispute. A similar unanimity in the perception of verbal flow is guaranteed to a certain extent by the strict quantities of the classical languages. Greek and Latin verse, at any rate, could not present us with lines a foot too long, like the one of Keats quoted in the preceding Essay. But the more elastic rhythms of modern, and especially of English, verse, which, though necessarily resting on a strict scheme of accents, may deviate from that scheme in any degree which allows it still to be felt as their underlying and

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controlling type, are of a markedly different nature, and stand in direct contrast to the accurately measured rhythms of developed Music.

I may be excused for bringing out this difference with some explicitness, as it is perpetually being ignored or contradicted. I referred in my last Essay to the common notion that a lyric poet 'ought by rights' to be a musician, and that musical setting is the authoritative test of the true verbal flow. This is a singular instance of the way in which an imposing-looking doctrine will override the most obvious facts. The difference between Music and Poetry, which the vapours of modern criticism constantly strive to conceal in the higher atmosphere of transcendental æsthetics, extends as far down even in this mundane and structural feature of rhythm. Not indeed to the very bottom of it. We have seen that the fundamental principle of regular recurrence, of a scheme of regular accents, is common to both arts; though I may add it is just that common principle which the school who are most determined to make out that the two arts are one are, by an odd perversity, the first to ignore—the 'oneness' being apparently more obvious to them in pieces of unmetrical 'declamation' than in pieces of formed and straight-

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forward song. But in all that supervenes on that common principle the difference may be complete. In Music, the presiding outline of recurring accents will allow the intervals of time between the regular accented points to be divided up among lengths of sound and silence in the most various ways. When melody is imposed on words, a limit is put to this variety by the double necessity of keeping the series of words reasonably continuous, and of suiting the capacities of the human voice; but within this limit the only special conditions are that the accented part of the bar shall not be allotted to some particularly inconspicuous word, and that the markedly conspicuous syllables in the verbal rhythm shall be treated with respect. These conditions being observed, the melodic rhythm takes complete possession of the words. In some quite simple cases it may accord with their direct flow, as in an ordinary hymn-tune; in other cases the independent verbal rhythm completely disappears—how completely an example may best show. Let any one, after repeating over in a natural way the passage beginning, 'Orpheus with his lute made trees,' reproduce its flow by repeating the syllable *la* in monotone; then let him treat the notes of Sir A. Sullivan's admirable setting in the same

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way, and compare the two rhythms. Outside the conditions mentioned they have absolutely no connection. Or, if it be said that the melodic rhythm here exhibits rather an exceptionally wide departure from the verbal flow, let the experiment be tried with the words and notes of a song of unsurpassable directness and simplicity, and one in which the union of the elements is absolutely perfect. One line, the first, will be quite enough: 'Du bist die Ruh', die Ewigkeit,' is of course a set of regular dissyllabic feet, and runs thus—

Lă lā′ | lă lā′ | lă lā′ | lă lā′.

The notes to which Schubert has set it are in triple (*i.e.* primarily trisyllabic) feet, and their flow is—

La′ la la | La′ a la | La′ a la | la′.

The conditions I named are again observed; stress is given to *Ruh'* and to the first syllable of *Ewigkeit*, and *die* is in each instance thrown into the weak part of the line; but the difference of the two rhythms is again complete. And in the face of such facts, which stare at us from almost every line of vocal music, we are told that the musical is the key to the verbal rhythm! The process in which the subtler verbal music of modern verse inevitably disappears, in something which may



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occasionally be as good, but is at least wholly different, is to present us with the authorised version of that music!

I need not press this point further on any one who will interrogate his own ears as to the rhythmic aspect of words, in any specimen of verse where it is most obvious to him; but it is worth suggesting that evidence of the truth might be drawn from the very place always relied on as the stronghold of the opposing view. The lyric parts of Greek dramas, we are told, were written to be sung or chanted. Of course they were; and of course that is the reason why, as every schoolboy knows, they are of essentially different construction from modern lyric verse, which is written to be read or said; and why, as read or said, they are often no more to our ears than sonorous prose; and why their metrical scheme has to be laboriously sought out by the student, and even when ascertained is often merely a scheme for the eye. It was in subordination to the time-values imposed by musical form that these sonorous word-labyrinths could attain distinct metrical comprehensibility. Whether the words or the notes were first composed, or whether they were gradually and simultaneously fashioned, makes no difference. The relation of the music to

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what the words are without the music remains the same; and is in fact that held by modern music in many cases (*e.g.* in Handel's oratorios) to downright prose, which it forces or persuades, by the very terms of the alliance, to become for the nonce metrical.

I may take this opportunity of protesting against another canon or test of poetical metre which has been promulgated, more specious because less instantly bound to break down than the setting to music—that, namely, of 'natural reading.' This can only mean the reading which would be natural to the words apart from their subjection to the special control of verse; and frequently, of course, such reading will sufficiently reveal that control. None the less is the canon a fallacy, as one out of innumerable possible examples will show. No one who repeats over the following sentences —'My brother John came and called, "Aren't you there?"' and 'Mary, get over the garden gate; mother's at home'—will fail to detect that the latter is potentially verse, instantly inviting another line and a rhyme, as, 'Many a minute she's had to wait;' while the former sentence may be said over 'naturally' a hundred times without falling into any sort of rhythmic order. Yet Shelley has in-



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troduced the one run as parallel to the other in one of his finest lyrics, the Ode beginning—

> Swiftly walk over the western wave,
> Spirit of night!

After he has got the flow of the first three stanzas well into our ears, he starts the fourth with the words—

> Thy brother Death came and cried,
> 'Would'st thou me?'

Clearly the requisite correspondence can only be felt, and a feeble hurrying off of the first line of this couplet prevented, by keeping empty of sound the moment occupied by the syllables *ver the* in the opening stanza (on the principle of a 'rest' in music), and so reserving 'came' for the *ictus*, which it can only receive at its duly measured distance from 'Death'—a distance which would be distinctly *un*natural between 'John' and 'came,' in the above prose-analogue. I have given this instance because it occurs in a particularly plain, straightforward metre. In more complicated rhythms, I should have thought that every one must have discovered the inadequacy of 'natural reading' to settle the metre, by finding several trials necessary before the right run is hit on—though once hit on, it of course becomes as clear as noonday. To

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take one instance—in the 'natural reading' of the words 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,' *down* would have no more emphasis than *sat*; the syllables would be about equal in value. It is one of Mr. Swinburne's most characteristic triumphs to have detected the glorious new rhythm which the words would yield, and thereby to have actually invented a new metre:—

By the | wáters of | Bábylon we sat | dówn and | wépt,
Re- | mémbering | thée,
That for | áges of | ágony hast en- | dúred and | slépt
And | wóuld'st not | sée.

*Sat dówn* here is the metrical equivalent of *endúred*; but not till we have got the third line into our ears is the force and swing of the five-syllable foot discerned. It is, of course, not necessary that in recitation the *sat* should actually be made as insignificant in sound as the first syllable of *endured*; it may even have all but its full natural value as compared with *down*. When once the rhythm has been caught, the slight extra stress laid on the *down* will resemble the 'accent' given to the first note of a bar or group in some regular pianoforte passage; and will thus prove amply sufficient to sustain the metre.

This digression has ended by bringing us back

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to what was our immediate point—the elasticity, and frequent deviations from the strict metric scheme, that so largely characterise the flow of modern verse; whence the remarkable consequence that it admits of varieties, sometimes even in the way it is actually read, and often in the way it is instinctively felt. One sometimes meets really surprising instances of such variety of instinct, which admit of no precise explanation.[1] The explanation, could we ever get at it, would again (like everything connected with verbal melody) go far deeper than the mere sound—at any rate in the case of persons who have got beyond

[1] The most striking modern instance may perhaps be found in Mr. Arnold's English hexameters (which their creator must have found musical), and Mr. Spedding's and Mr. Swinburne's remarks on them. Or, to take an example of a single line, we may consider Mr. Swinburne's criticism of Shelley's

Fresh spring, and summer and winter hoar,

in which he finds 'more divine and sovereign sweetness' than in any other line in English. Yet he says that the effect is obtained by the suppression of a single syllable, as in this line—

Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?

The line is a five-foot one, corresponding to

Trembling at that where I had stood before,

in the preceding stanza; surely then the suppression is of *two* syllables; *fresh* and *spring* are each of them taken as a complete foot. I, at any rate, can get music into the line on no other terms.

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the stage of regarding any deviation from the strict iambic scansion of blank verse and heroics as a liberty. If the rhythmic run as to the merit of which two persons disagree were put before them in nonsense-syllables, their ears would often reveal no definite discordance. But when the rhythm is dominating comprehensible language, that different individuality which, as we have seen, the same word or word-fragment may present to different minds comes in as a disturbing fact, and receives fresh illustration; for something in the physiognomy of the words may have the effect of making them seem either to resist or to yield to the particular rhythmic domination, and to do either in a variety of degrees.

This may conclude our brief analysis of the mode in which the non-reasonable part of poetical effect is related to the actual varieties in individual taste. The relation is none the less important for being confined mainly to the estimate of individual passages and stanzas and single lines; for not only are such fragments wont to be taken as the basis for deliberate critical judgments; but (as we shall shortly see) they are of quite pre-eminent importance in the popular estimate of poets. Though the inquiry has lain among facts too

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obscure and intangible to allow of our tracing the complete operation of causes up to any particular result in this or that person's appreciation, it will have done its work if it has helped to show that the varieties are inevitable, and rest on valid grounds which can be, so to speak, localised, if not thoroughly sifted. Emerging now into clearer air, we may see how our conclusions bear on the subject of appreciation of Poetry in general.

First of all, we are led to remark how unique for any average person must be the position of his native language in respect of his appreciation of verse. That immediate intuition of language, that sense of an atmosphere and special physiognomy in words which springs naturally from very early associations, the delicate instinct for verbal rhythm, both in itself and in its relation to the sense—the very elements which are essential to the high efficiency of the non-reasonable element in verse—must for the majority even of educated people be practically confined to their own tongue. This remark, I am aware, is likely to meet with dissent. But that, for an average lover of Poetry, its quintessential effects should belong peculiarly to productions in his own language is surely not strange

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if we consider the marvellously close connection of the elements of that one language with the whole of his mental life and growth. To the poetry of other languages, even when they are but moderately well known, enough may remain in the reasonable element, with a large measure of the rhythmic, to open up springs of strong imaginative delight; but the delight is not the same as when the language seems the spontaneous incarnation of the thought. I am speaking, be it observed, of the majority. A minority doubtless exists for whom the distinctive magic of verse does exist in languages other than their own; but it would be a curious point to ascertain how far the magic at all corresponds with that felt by a native. Greek and Latin poetry stand on somewhat exceptional ground; the study of these languages giving the very amplest opportunities for the formation of a vivid literary interest, since it is conducted entirely on the line of literature, and for the most part of first-rate literature; and the poems themselves offering the rarest attractions to a taste for artistically ordered words as such, in the accuracy (as well as in the magnificence) of their metres. The individuality with which words and phrases may get to live in a literary, as opposed to a native,

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aspect may thus attain wonderful distinctness; and some persons (though I believe them to be very exceptional) may find their favourite classical passages haunting their memory as passionately and persistently as any poetry in their own language. The delight is undoubted; all that one would like to know is what qualitative resemblance it bears to that of an ancient Greek or Roman of equal natural sensibility. That the resemblance would often not be strong is, I think, suggested by the point in connection with modern verse to which I wish next to call attention.

In verse of another language, it is not at all uncommon to find ourselves not only failing to be specially impressed by what natives find specially impressive—and this would far oftener appear if we were left to ourselves without their guidance, since nothing is so infectious as admiration—but, conversely, impressed by what natives do not find specially impressive. A very instructive instance of this is Goethe's peculiar admiration for Moore. In verse so simple as Moore's, it specially needs the native ear to detect with real certainty the presence or absence of the impalpable something which separates the magical from the commonplace. Heine would be the parallel instance for English-

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men; only with Heine we find ourselves confirmed (as well as guided) by the verdict of his own countrymen. The phenomenon is easily explained. The slight strangeness that belongs to foreign, as compared with native, words makes it easy to invest them with a sort of distinction which out of our own minds does not belong to them; and by this means the simplest phrase in a foreign language easily becomes a sort of wonder to us. It has a piquancy as of a thing which we seem to know all about, and yet which stimulates our interest by keeping, so to speak, a little way off from us; as even a word in our own language seems occasionally to do when we isolate and over-carefully consider it. And there comes to be a very distinct fascination in seeing meanings which, expressed in a language known from infancy, might appear of no particular value, rehabilitated in a less familiar linguistic garb, which forces us to more conscious attention, and repays us by this novel picturesqueness. One readily sees how in this way the stanzas beginning—

> Those evening bells, those evening bells,
> How many a tale their music tells!

might obtain in a German ear a magic none the less real for being purely subjective. And though

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the habit of beginning, and very commonly ending, our study of foreign poetry with thoroughly well accredited specimens may save mistakes on a large scale, in matters of detail we have probably most of us been the happy and unsuspecting victims of similar experiences.

On the whole, then, we may conclude not only that considerable differences are bound to exist between native and foreign appreciation of Poetry, but that a main cause for their existence may lie in a region where it has not been usual to look for it. Those facts concerning the non-reasonable intuitions of language and rhythm, which (in the case of living languages, at any rate) tend to preclude foreign productions from taking as complete and haunting possession of the mind as native, may be quite as much at the root of the matter as those more distinctly intellectual qualities of authors—as shown in subjects and ideas and general mode of treatment—which may bear the marks of national character too unmistakably to appeal with wide and complete success to another people. A further consideration will enable us to carry this conclusion a little more into detail. As languages develop, there is a gradual increase in that subtle atmosphere of association and suggestiveness which

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causes many words to present what I have called a different physiognomy to different people, and suggests rhythmic combinations in which that difference becomes specially operative—this atmosphere being in fact largely due to those very poetical usages on the appreciation of which it in turn so decidedly reacts. It is not that the language becomes more poetical—the reverse may rather be the case—but the use of words and their possibilities for Poetry become more complex. Hence it is that the earliest poems of a language are those which produce the greatest similarity of impression on different readers. This appears to some extent even in the literature of the dead languages. Homer, for instance, is probably very far more the same—understood and felt in the same way—to all his readers than Virgil ; and the result is seen in comparative estimates—Homer's pre-eminent rank being never disputed, while Virgil, who has been deemed by not a few the very greatest of poets, is quietly referred to by M. de Banville and Mr. Saintsbury as a respectable member of the second class. And similarly, Chaucer and Dante are more the same to all readers, probably even of their own nation, and certainly if we include readers of all nations, than Shelley and Leopardi, and even than

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Shakespeare. It would be absurd, of course, to lay the whole stress on the linguistic element; divergences of modern thought are enough to account for a special discordance in the estimation of various modern poets. But a proof that the other element largely enters is the fact that in a foreign language we are far less able than in our own to care deeply for poetry to the 'thought' of which we are opposed or indifferent. And it is very noticeable that the modern poet who has had the greatest European reputation, and in whose case we may therefore infer that the impression produced on native and on foreign readers has been most nearly of one and the same kind—Byron—is precisely the one who is most defective in exquisiteness of language and rhythm, and *à fortiori* in that nameless fusion of the two which made up our non-reasonable element; who, indeed, often displayed towards it 'the insensibility of a barbarian.'

As a precisely converse case I would venture to adduce Wordsworth; and Mr. Arnold, in prophesying that in time foreigners will come to accept Wordsworth as (with one exception) the greatest English poet since Shakespeare, seems to me to overlook both the part which the non-reasonable element holds

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in Wordsworth's best work, and the almost essential connection of its power with familiar knowledge of English. In Wordsworth at his highest, from the very simplicity of the effects, the magic is, if not more possessing, at any rate more astonishing than is possible in effects more elaborately and consciously exquisite. His simplicity at its best (and it is only by his best that he will live even for Englishmen) is of a sort possible only in an extremely advanced stage of a language and literature —none the less so that he himself imagined (and in many cases only too correctly) that he was making Poetry talk the speech of quite commonplace life. And this is of all qualities the hardest for a foreign ear to catch, the distinction from what is really commonplace being conveyed by such curiously intangible means. We have seen, indeed, throughout what a Protean thing is the highest charm of Poetry; but in language which is obviously choice there is something at least to get hold of. I could imagine that a foreigner here and there might appreciate the magic of Rossetti,[1] but hardly of

[1] This surmise strikes me as hazardous after reading an admiring article on Rossetti, recently published in a leading French review, where a version of the magnificent sonnet, 'Look in my face: my name is Might-have-been,' opens thus: 'Regardez-moi dans le visage: mon nom est ce qu aurait pu avoir lieu.'

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Wordsworth. Yet Wordsworth could never be a power in the world apart from this indescribable quality. In what proportion of his poems it exists is a question which would be variously answered; but it would hardly, I think, be rash to assert that his place in the English hierarchy will in the future depend on a very decided minority even of those included in Mr. Arnold's admirable little collection. The expectation then that foreigners, who (if I am right) are almost debarred from detecting his most characteristic poetical excellence, will ever be brought widely to acknowledge his pre-eminence, on the ground of conceptions which, whatever their importance, might be completely expressed in French prose, seems to ignore the laws by which Poetry penetrates to human hearts. Byron's wit and rebellious rhetoric were precisely what was wanted to spice his verse for European consumption; but no religion of Nature is likely to command success beyond the region where its presentation can be felt as quintessentially poetical.

Even Mr. Arnold's precedents for taking foreign opinion as a crucial and independent test of the relative greatness of our own poets are not quite so conclusive as they look. One cannot quarrel with the case of Shakespeare; though as a dramatist,

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and a dramatist who could be taken as the champion of the liberty of genius against the slavery of rules, he enjoyed special facilities for obtaining Continental recognition; while even with him one can seldom be sure how much is not taken on trust from us. And, though Germany has certainly adopted him, our own view of him will hardly be much fortified by confirmation from some one who openly or secretly prefers the rhetoric of Racine, or even of Victor Hugo. But the case of Milton is far more questionable. Outside this country Milton is simply the author of *Paradise Lost*; and *Paradise Lost* is precisely the poem which foreigners will believe to be very sublime if told so, and will study with the conscientious satisfaction of killing off a classic, but which can never be to more than an occasional one of them a large spiritual fact. Indeed, to how many of ourselves can it be said to be one? To how many is it a beloved poem, and not rather a remarkable piece of literary workmanship, lit up, amid much that is tedious and artificial, by a considerable number of passages of extraordinary splendour, which are just what depend for standing out from the rest on the delicate susceptibility to language and rhythm of a native ear? I can scarcely believe Mr. Arnold



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really to hold that the amount of emotional life produced from year to year on the Continent by the perusal of *Paradise Lost* is such as would have compelled foreigners to give it a foremost rank among the productions of the human mind, apart from the prestige attaching to it here as the accredited specimen of the epic in twelve or twenty-four or a hundred books, which is hardly less *de rigueur* as a national appendage than a metropolitan city or museum.

But the more interesting questions as to the popularity of Poetry are naturally those which we need not cross the Channel to encounter; and after our long discussion of the *critical* appreciation of native Poetry, it will be a relief to turn to the *non-critical*. If the two topics need a connection, we may find one in remarking how little the critics represent the public. This seems really to be only one more odd consequence of our 'non-reasonable element.' As we have seen, that element is emphatically one which operates mainly in picked passages of limited length. It follows that its strongest influence in the formation of comparative estimates will appear not so much in the case of the professed student of Poetry as of the average poetry-lover, who troubles himself

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comparatively little with the larger aspects of literature, and thinks very much more about poems as made than about the minds of their makers. This is a distinction which more pronounced students may easily forget, but which it is specially necessary to remember in any judgment of the mission and success of Poetry in the world at large. Either the right to possession in the poetic treasury must be circumscribed in the most pharisaical manner, or we must recognise in an enormous number of persons a relation to the art wonderfully different from that of the literary critic. For one person who could produce three moderately true and coherent sentences on the scope of Shelley's or Wordsworth's work, a thousand have received the strongest individual impression from *The Skylark* or the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. This in no way detracts from the value of enlightened criticism, which numbers of these very people may attend to and enjoy; but their enjoyment and attention will be apt to be of somewhat sporadic and fortuitous kind, which their instinctive preferences are likely to survive. And this surely has a very distinct bearing on the habit, noticed in the preceding Essay, of backing up any standard of excellence



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which the critic himself may adopt and expound, by explicit or implicit reference to the general opinion. For it is just in the general opinion—inasmuch as it is the opinion of a mass of people, each of whom, so far as he has judged independently, has judged by fragments—that the poetical element which cannot be proved or debated, but which may be fully exemplified in fragments, is exceptionally influential. And in proportion to the largeness of the instruction which criticism can give about the general scope of various poets' work —on such large questions as how much or how well on the whole they have criticised or represented life—is the smallness of the addition that it can make to the appreciation of the gems which any one has found out, or which have found him out, without it.

The standard of popularity is one which has rarely, I think, been fairly considered. It is really a standard by itself, which it will prove very hard to connect definitely with any other; and the results it can give depend, not on arguable grounds, but on statistics. And though the critics, if it came to the point, might sometimes be shy of taking that general census which is to confirm their particular

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view, popularity does nevertheless, if rightly understood, seem to give us the best approach we are likely to get to an authoritative criterion. But it must be rightly understood. The author of *Natural Religion* has poured scorn on the judging of Poetry by the pleasure that it gives, and calls the application of such a test 'utilitarian.' But for that name to imply disparagement, it would have to be confined (as the ethical opponents of Utilitarianism have so often insisted on confining it) to the mere pursuit of the most obvious pleasure of the moment, whatever it may be. The injustice of this is clear; though the danger of the prevalence of that base form, which would dethrone some classic in every generation, cannot be too clearly recognised in Art as in Ethics. But the question how far a legitimate extension of the term 'popularity' would not reverse its more immediate and ephemeral implications—how far, for instance, the individual moments very materially brightened in the last ten years by the fact of Mr. Browning's having existed, might not compare favourably in number with those very materially brightened by the fact of 'Ouida's' having existed —is one of more than mere speculative interest. There is a very practical reason for recognising the

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less direct ways in which Poetry affects pleasure, or rather happiness, and for recognising these ways explicitly as *happiness-giving*, and not merely as edifying and elevating—a reason of which the author of *Natural Religion* would, I am sure, see the force; namely, that we are thus enabled to meet on their own ground those who proclaim the indifference of the views and the subject of a poem, and the poet's equal claim to our admiration and gratitude for adorning and transfiguring any views and any subject, provided by so doing he can evoke pleasurable emotion.

Having dwelt so much on the non-reasonable element of Poetry, I am specially concerned to emphasise this other point. For Poetry can undoubtedly shed her magic charm both on the evil and on the good. '*Toute émotion lui sert: elle est mauvaise et bonne, chaste et libertine;*' and the school of the critic from whom I quote contend that this is not only what she can be, but what she ought to be. A contention earnestly put forward in the sacred name of Beauty always looks a little difficult to confute; but the difficulty is wholly due to that name's fallacious suggestion of some objective quality in the work itself, independent of its effect on the

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observer. Once translate that quality (as every quality of ideal no less than of material objects must be translated) into the effect it produces—once perceive that beauty has no merit or meaning save as a means of happiness—and it becomes immediately clear that so far as 'beauty' is used in an *exclusive* sense, embracing some happiness-giving elements and not others, it has no claim to be considered the sole end or criterion of Poetry. That it is the *dominant* quality, in the sense that only through its presence can any other qualities become effective, I have been doing my best to urge; but this clearly allows us to hold that not beauty in any exclusive sense, but happiness, is the end and the criterion. And then we establish our point, if we can go on to show that the amount of happiness which enters the world through the agency of this or that poem immensely depends on the views and the subject, whose importance it has been sought to minimise or to deny for the supposed glorification of Beauty.

And to show this is surely not difficult. It is simply a question how much we consider the appeal of Poetry to be related to the independent attitude of the reader towards the things talked about. The order and degree in which the several

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arts have reference to the spectator's views of things outside their mere artistic excellence, and in which, therefore, an affinity between the artist's views and his own is of importance to him, naturally corresponds with the order and degree in which they actually deal with life outside them—to the extent, at any rate, that Music is at one end of the scale and Poetry at the other. To estimate with any accuracy the amount of wealth which artistic work conveys to a man, we must consider not only the minutes when it is actually absorbing him, but the number and strength of the connections that it forms with other minutes. Now the vast majority of these other minutes are occupied with a life lived outside any sort of art, and with various material and spiritual aspects of the world experienced in a life outside any sort of art. And this life and these aspects are not things as to which it is possible for a man to be in a state of balanced indifference. His inward communings must largely consist in the instinctive application of a more or less definite set of views to the ever-passing stream of facts, and in comparing or seeking to modify the aspects of the world according to the emotions which they have come to excite in himself. It surely then stands to reason that, *ceteris paribus*—

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that is to say, beauty or artistic excellence, so far as we can isolate it, being equal—the poetry will be most *companionable* to him, and will therefore on the whole enrich the greatest number of minutes in his life, which is most in harmony with familiar strains of thought and feeling; which, instead of encountering friction and resistance, or having to carve out its channel to his affections by sheer dint of beauty, finds channels already marked out for it to fill and overflow. It is but the old principle of association. If a main part of any one's emotional life is rooted in certain views and sentiments, which are necessarily brought into consciousness and kept fresh from day to day by the constant occurrence of material for their application, and if, as it happens, these views and sentiments have found recognition in some poetry and not in other poetry, then it is the memory of the former and not of the latter which will tend to recur when the consciousness is present; and it is the former and not the latter which, even when not definitely recalled, will by a more gradual process have endowed the views and feelings with its own warmth and radiance. To those, then, who hold, as most who think at all do now hold, that morality in its widest meaning is the great progressive force of the world,

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and that 'joy in widest commonalty spread' is the goal to which it tends, it is impossible, *ceteris paribus*, but that that poetry should convey most spiritual wealth, and involve the greatest number of enriched minutes, which is in recognisable harmony with these sentiments, rather than poetry which is either markedly self-centred or markedly visionary and fantastic.

It may be said that I am forcing too strong a contrast, and that an immense amount of the best poetry is as free from any assignable moral suggestiveness, even of the vaguest kind, as from self-centred sensuousness or flights of unsubstantial and irresponsible fancy. This objection has only much force as long as 'moral' is unfairly taken as meaning in some way didactic, or as implying some necessary reference to actual conduct. But to a consistent Utilitarian, poetry may be moral which has no explicit reference to anything beyond the writer's own pleasure, provided its suggestions are such as may naturally enter with irradiating or soothing influence into many moments of many healthy lives. Such poetry, for example, is 'I wandered lonely as a cloud,' where the couplet—

> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude—

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reveals one of the most striking ways in which natural beauty is able to intertwine its influence with moments of common life. And as the experience is one which all would more and more share according as the conditions of life were healthier, and which is for all indefinitely intensified and transfigured by its concentration in these perfect lines, the poem is eminently in harmony with the Utilitarian ideal. But, indeed, my contrast, even if objected to as a test of excellence, seems incontestable on the ground of fact. Thus, to take four poems in which the art is unsurpassable and therefore (if 'the *chef-d'œuvre* is adequate to the *chef-d'œuvre*') equal, can it be denied that Gray's *Elegy* and Wordsworth's *Solitary Reaper* will enrich more minutes of most readers' lives than Coleridge's *Christabel* and Mr. Swinburne's *Before Dawn*? And sufficient evidence for the impossibility, in these moral and self-conscious days, that literature should be judged excellent irrespectively of the subjects and views which it adopts, and should sit as loose to the moral realities of life as do the arts of abstract form, may surely be drawn from the disastrous results which the professedly exclusive worship of Beauty has produced in it. To take a single instance, it is entirely

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owing to that tone of worship, to the rank incense offered to the senses, to the spurious halo of ideality or even of holiness shed round absolutely egoistic and unsocial pleasure, as the one bright centre in a world which is otherwise perfectly dull and despicable, that *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is so much more indefensible a book than the extremest specimens of M. Zola's frankly hideous realism. 'Nothing that leaves us depressed,' as Mr. Swinburne has truly said, 'is a true work of art'; and who but a fool would not be depressed by the view that the world exists for people with beautiful bodies and unbridled appetites, if he happens to possess neither?—or equally, we may add, if he happens to possess the latter without the former, the idea of a close caste of voluptuaries being as offensive to the masses of the vicious as of the virtuous. The immeasurable difference between the results of such beauty-worship as this of Gautier and beauty-worship like that of Keats must surely be sought in something outside beauty-worship; and to that something I know not what comprehensive name can be given except 'morality.'

This topic might lead us far. But it is enough to have suggested that the popularity of Poetry must be decided, not by any blatant clamour in

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which a number of people may happen for the moment to concur, but by the number of minutes in individual lives which are consciously or unconsciously enriched by it; and that, so understood, popularity is hardly to be despised as a standard of excellence. Coming to the more direct application of the standard, we must admit the difficulties incident to any comparison of pleasures which considers depth as well as surface, and asks not only how far the pleasure or influence extends, but how intense and penetrating is its character. But even on this more difficult point we may often obtain sufficient certainty, if not for a complete classification of poetical achievements, at least for testing and correcting estimates which leave the canon of popularity out of account. Thus, on the one hand, we might decline to weigh as evidence of superiority the fact of Byron's having excited far wider admiration on the Continent than Shelley or Wordsworth, until it had been carefully noted that the admiration is of a somewhat superficial kind, and depends chiefly on wit and rhetoric, and hardly at all on the most distinctively poetical qualities. On the other hand, noting, and perhaps sharing, the extreme enthusiasm of specialists in the artistic use of language for such a poem as

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*Kubla Khan*, we might inquire on how large a public it is possible that it should have the effect of more than a passing whiff of lovely music.

But apart from individual poets, there is one sort of classification which seems specially illegitimate without distinct reference to the happiness test—that, namely, of different *styles* of Poetry as comparatively superior and inferior. The superstition in favour of Epics has been already glanced at. It arose not unnaturally from the supreme excellence of a few existing specimens; but the argument that some particular sort of work must be higher in kind than any other because only a few workers have succeeded in it is clearly very inconclusive—as though one were to say that the Oratorio is inherently higher 'in kind' than the Symphony or the Opera. It would be at least as fair to maintain on the other side that, if there were some intrinsic superiority in the kind, more out of the number of considerable poets who have attempted the kind would have produced considerable results.

An interesting attempt to classify styles of Poetry has been made by Mr. Alfred Austin. Supplementing his doctrine that amount of life imaginatively represented is the test of poetical

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excellence, he divides the sorts of life which Poetry represents under the heads of Action, Reflection, Emotion, and Perception, thus arranged (he considers) in order of their comparative excellence or importance; whence he assigns a corresponding order of merit to the Epic, Dramatic, Reflective, Lyrical, and Descriptive styles of Poetry, and thus obtains what he regards as 'a critical canon of considerable pregnancy.' As Aaron's rod budded, I suppose that a canon may be pregnant; but I cannot think that this one brings forth much in the way of illumination. It seems much more likely to 'breed fruitful hot water' between the partisans of the various schools, or of the representative poets of each. One might object to it *in limine* that it would make out the choruses of the *Agamemnon* to be work of an inferior order to the dialogue, and the most renowned passages in the *Iliad*, such as the descriptions of the shield of Achilles and of the watch-fires, to be lapses from Homer's highest style; or, if this be thought hypercritical, that at any rate the description, 'imaginative representation of great action,' cannot by any possibility be applied to *Hamlet*, or to the fourth book of the *Æneid*, or to the *Divina Commedia*. By dropping 'great

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action,' and falling back for the distinguishing mark of his first class on its 'dealings with' more of life, Mr. Austin might, no doubt, find room in it for these masterpieces; though the last of them would still break through the classification, since it is not properly either epic or dramatic. But new difficulties would spring up. *The Ring and the Book* deals with more life and with life in more complex aspects than any contemporary poem, and its mode of treatment is extraordinarily impressive; nor can it be said to lack 'poetic beauty and poetic truth.' But shall we feel its excellence particularly well brought out by calling it (as Mr. Austin's principle would compel us to do) a remarkably fine specimen of the highest style of Poetry, when all that, on the same principle, we could say of the *Pythian Odes* or *Lycidas* would be that they are remarkably fine specimens of a lower style of Poetry?

And when we come to look at the difference, is it not closely associated with the fact that these latter poems make, or have in their time made, for themselves a far larger audience than we can ever imagine *The Ring and the Book* making? And, going a little farther, may we not say that their power to do this has depended on the old point—on a high degree of that verbal and rhythmic

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magic which is irrespective of life; and that the occurrence of that same verbal and rhythmic magic (unless in the most fragmentary way) was an impossibility in Mr. Browning's poem, because incompatible with that subtle and complex method of 'dealing with life' on which its claim to be a great poem at all is based? Poetry being a compound, the fullest efficiency of which is possible only by the fullest excellence of reasonable and non-reasonable elements, declines from its highest point in proportion as the amount of either of them is in defect; and in criticism the neglect of either tends always, by antagonism, to produce neglect of the other. The importance of sound subject-matter and a sound attitude towards life being neglected or denied by some, in favour of a limited something called Beauty, the reaction against such false and exclusive worship, and the fear of seeming to give in to it, blind others to the fact that the non-reasonable or magical element, which largely constitutes that beauty, is a factor indispensable to the most valuable, *i.e.* the most happiness-giving, poetry.

Mr. Austin, no doubt, professes to apply his criterion only to such specimens of each style as conform to those 'laws of poetic beauty and poetic



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truth' under which, if anywhere, we have seen that the non-reasonable element must be accommodated. But to justify his hierarchy of styles he would have to take specimens which *equally* conform to those laws—specimens which, so far as that element goes, start level; so that their particular excellence in respect of it will introduce no confusion into the comparative estimates of the styles to which they respectively belong. And to do this is practically impossible. Thus, in the style to which is assigned the foremost rank, we at once find that the most prominent recent instance, the most considerable poem of the contemporary poet who has most dealt with action, is one to which the appearance of the magical element in anything remotely approaching its fullest force seems necessarily forbidden. The 'style' of *The Ring and the Book* is found repellant even by some to whom the art of many of Mr. Browning's rhymed poems is of the most tantalisingly captivating sort; and our terms become sadly confused if poetic superiority be claimed for a *general* style which includes a great poem composed in a *particular* 'style' that no one describes as poetic. Nor would it seem at all a sufficient answer to say that other long works, such as those of Homer and Shake-

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speare, which belong to the class that deals with action, have further shown supremacy in the magical use of rhythmic language. For it is just by pushing to an extreme the very characteristic of the class itself, just by belonging to the class in a still more superlative degree, and dealing with action and the springs of action in a more many-sided and complex way, that *The Ring and the Book* has been put (in most of its course) outside the chances of such magical use.

But a further unreality attaches to such an arrangement of classes of Poetry in order of merit or importance; and, again, the defect seems connected with a want of due reference to the part which poetical productions are now playing, and likely still to play, in the actual arena of human experience. It lies in ignoring the conditions under which one or another class may most naturally flourish. Poetry itself may seem to us superior or inferior; but the class or style of Poetry is, so to speak, an instrument which is greatest when it is best adapted to its purpose. If we believe at all in a necessary course of mental as of material development, then even those who regard the movement as rather away from than towards the best poetical conditions must still admit that new



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stages of the movement will demand new modes of poetical expression. That a poet has worked in one style rather than another has often been less a matter of his own choice than of his time and surroundings; and the comparisons which might be defensible as applied to the actual products seem somewhat meaningless as applied to the modes or instruments, which can be fairly judged only by their adequacy to the work required of them. It would seem, then, that in a century in which by far the larger amount of poetical force has found its inevitable vent in lyrical and reflective channels, language is more or less strained by insistence on the innate superiority of a style of Poetry less in harmony with the irresistible *Zeit-geist.*

Our view here is apt to be a little obscured by the unique supremacy of Shakespeare; for, finding him to be our greatest, in the direct sense of being our most happiness-giving,[1] poet, men are predisposed to catch at any classification which assigns the highest rank to the poetry of action;

[1] This can hardly be questioned, even in the age of Tennyson, if it is remembered that Shakespeare is the only poet of quite the highest rank who gives immense pleasure (according to their own account) to persons who are otherwise somewhat indifferent to poetry; and the sum of happiness due to him is thus swelled in a very exceptional way.

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though even on Shakespeare's account, when one remembers what his verbal and rhythmic magic at its best can be, one may resent having that element of Poetry treated as a sort of recognised common quantity, possessed in practically equal measure by the considerable poets of all the compared classes. But had Shakespeare never been born, I doubt if many living Englishmen, unbiassed by study of Greek literature, would have discovered in the drama an inherent superiority over all other styles; while as for our English epic, with its controversies and its classical allusions, it would be mere paradox to maintain that it does or can exercise as wide and deep an emotional influence as the great lyric outburst of the present century. And even if we go to really popular epics, and admit the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to be the greatest of *poems*, yet if they could only have been produced when and where they were, and if the epic, in the aspects in which it represents the class of 'action,' has not since approved itself as the channel through which the greatest poetical force obtains access to the world, nothing seems gained by proclaiming this class to be objectively the greatest of *styles*, to people who cannot but draw most of their sustenance from other styles. If they had a choice,

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it might be different; but, till Greek is universally known, the lyric and reflective poetry of their own language must be (some plays of Shakespeare perhaps excepted) the greatest poetical fact in the world *to them*. I should prefer to avoid the word 'greatest' altogether in connection with styles, and would only insist that for every nation and every generation the *most important* style is that whose products have the widest and most penetrating spiritual influence. The poems, or passages from poems, whose penetrating influence has spread through many nations and many generations, have no doubt established a sort of claim to be called the greatest individual specimens of the art; these, however, cannot possibly be included under any single style.

To sum up now the main results of this and the preceding Essay. We found the weakest point of poetical criticism, and the chief source of unfruitful controversy, in a tendency to overmuch comparison—not the comparison which simply seeks to bring out characteristic qualities and poetical affinities (for of this we can hardly have too much), but the comparison which insists on applying some over-rigid measuring-rule for the

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establishment of absolute orders of merit, whether of poets or poems or classes of Poetry. That tendency we examined in its more general aspect, and then followed out to its particular effect in connection with Poetry. We traced it to that natural love of classification which to many educated persons makes it almost a necessity of interest in any subject where scope is given to varieties of excellence, that they should assign stars to their magnitudes, set up their special heroes who will have foils in lesser luminaries, and assert the power of their own personality in emphasising the verdicts of their own particular experience. This habit, we saw, was almost inevitably associated with the desire to impress on others the justice of one's own verdicts—an association specially strong in the case of so enormous an intellectual and emotional interest as Art. And the normal means of impressing one's views on others being by reasonable argument, we found further that Poetry is precisely the art which affords to this means the largest and most legitimate scope, and where any element beyond its range is most easily neglected; and consequently that critics of poets and Poetry perpetually seemed to rest their whole case on the reasoned exposition and reasonable canons of

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excellence which they were able to supply. In the great divergence of existing verdicts we saw a plain hint, confirmed in other ways, that some element which played an important part in the formation of the judgments was ignored in the expositions; and that the very allowance that might apparently be made for it, in a vague phrase such as 'laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth,' betokened neglect of the enormous power and variety of its influence. The moral was that, if there is so much in our poetical convictions and preferences which we must accept without explaining, we should be chary of attaching too absolute a value to our own orders of merit, and of measuring poetical achievements by any 'reasonable' considerations.

A discussion of the nature of this magical or non-reasonable element led on to its bearings on varieties of taste, and so on varieties of judgments and of comparative estimates of poets and poems. We found, too, that the same neglect of it which so swells the controversial and ephemeral part of criticisms is at the root of various rather unreal views as to the position and future of Poetry in the modern world; and that critics often ignore the actual position of poetical productions in the minds of

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men, even while loosely appealing to the world's verdict. Passing on to more general questions of appreciation of Poetry, we found that the canon of 'popularity' or 'the general verdict' must be treated at once with respect and with caution. For if popularity in its fullest sense seems to be the best, and indeed the only, conceivable objective standard of excellence, we have also to recognise that the appeal to it cannot be made very definite at any particular date, and that no census would be delicate enough to measure the depth as well as the width of poetical influences; and, above all, that that extreme acuteness of pleasure, which is at the root of any one's irresistible impulse to claim the general verdict for this or that poet, is to be regarded as more or less idiosyncratic—not, of course, in the sense that he is alone in it, but that the perhaps large class who share it are still confronted with other large classes, whose experience of the same feeling lies in different directions.

It is hard to enforce points like these without conveying an impression of factious opposition; but I have not said a word that detracts from the substantial value of the critical writings to which I have mainly referred. What I have urged leaves the

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positive sphere of reasoning and expository criticism absolutely unchanged; indeed in considering the standard of popularity, taken in the deeper Utilitarian sense, the essential importance of the poet's choice of subject, and of his relation to the very points on which reasoning and expository critics can find most to say, was insisted on with an urgency to which some of those critics would themselves demur. Nothing has been opposed, except the habit of backing favourites and passing universal judgments—and even this only in excess. Let the champions continue from time to time to enter the lists and have their tilts; man is a combative animal, and poetical polemics may amuse even where they do not instruct. But the recognition, in principle, that things seen, even by other people, go for more than things not seen, even by oneself, and, in practice, that energy is more profitably spent in struggling towards the other people's standpoints than in defending one's own, would tend, I believe, to a most salutary increase in the sum of happiness derived from appreciation of Poetry.

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## *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC.*[1]

MR. JAMES SULLY, in a generous review of *The Power of Sound* published in *Mind*, vol. vi, put forward certain objections in so clear and compact a form as to invite reply. And though I can

[1] Some apology is perhaps needed for including in a collection of Essays what is in form merely a reply to criticisms of a previous book. A good deal of what is here said might, no doubt, have found a more appropriate place in a second edition of the work itself: *might*, but for one sufficient reason—the practical certainty, namely, that the work itself will never reach a second edition. Though expressly addressed to the 'naïve layman,' demanding no preliminary knowledge of even the simplest technicalities, and largely devoted to a vindication of the essentially popular character of the art which is its subject, its bulk got it at once stamped as 'ponderous,' and it has been supposed to be an esoteric treatise, comprehensible only to experts. After seven years, an impression of this sort is not likely to get corrected. But so strange a thing is authorship that even the failure of a book does not preclude the desire that its positions should be made as intelligible as possible; and it is as tending possibly to make some points clearer that these brief supplementary remarks are reprinted, with some notice of foreign criticism which has appeared since they were first published. Though necessarily much compressed, they are so written as to be understood without consultation of the 'ponderous' tome to which they refer.

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scarcely hope here to make any positive addition to my side of the case, or to be more convincing in a brief paper than in a long book, there may be some advantage in embracing the views attacked in a succinct statement, and pointing out where and how (as it appears to me) the attack leaves the gist and strength of my arguments untouched.

Mr. Sully's main difference from me lies in his refusing to recognise the unique and independent character which I attribute to what I have called 'the musical faculty,' and the consequent impossibility of obtaining ultimate or even approximate explanations of its actions and verdicts, and of the more distinctive sort of musical impressions; 'the hopelessness' (to quote my preface) 'of penetrating Music in detail, and of obtaining, whether in objective facts of structure or in fancied analogies and interpretations, any standpoint external to the actual inward impression, from which to judge it' —from which to measure and account for its presentation in any particular case of a characteristic pleasure-giving quality. The faculty to which I refer the perception of this quality Mr. Sully regards as an 'unnecessary *deus ex machinâ*,' brought in to cut the knot of an æsthetic problem admittedly complex and difficult, but likely (he thinks) to

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yield, without any such hypothesis, to the further progress of psychological investigation. Professor C. Stumpf, of Halle, in an elaborate and for the most part very sympathetic examination of my work, made a similar objection to what he called my 'obstinate nativism.' [1]

Now I must observe, to begin with, that there is a sense in which, and a point up to which, the 'faculty' and its uniqueness and independence would, I can hardly doubt, be admitted by Mr. Sully and Professor Stumpf; and that for the greater number of the positions and arguments connected with it in *The Power of Sound* (e.g. in respect of the relations of Music to the other arts, and to human emotion and character), that sense would be amply sufficient. Quite apart from abstruse psychological problems, and simply taking 'musical faculty' as I have defined it, to denote *the ability to construe and enjoy a number of successive tones as a unity or single and recognisable bit of melodic form*, we find in it a useful name for a particular power which two persons, alike in all other respects of taste and temperament, may differ by the whole

[1] *Musikpsychologie in England*, Leipzig, 1885. Professor Stumpf's own views will doubtless be developed in the concluding volume of his great work on *Tonpsychologie*.

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extent of possessing in perfection and not possessing at all. And in the broadest and most obvious of all musical facts—the impossibility of connecting the possession of this faculty with any other particular characteristic, moral, intellectual, or even artistic—a uniqueness and independence of a very remarkable kind is surely established. For this remarkable fact, which belongs not to scientific research but to the most ordinary observation, I find a basis (and an explanation, so far at any rate as things are explained by being referred to something more ultimate and fundamental than themselves) in that more precise view of the uniqueness and independence of the musical faculty which results from a careful examination of the exact work which it performs—of the characteristics of the special 'forms' with which it deals. Each of these forms consists of a particular set of accurate *time*-measurements fused into combination with a particular set of accurate *pitch*-measurements, of which latter the ear *alone among the senses* can take cognisance. Here again I do not understand Mr. Sully to differ from me. In the sense and in the degree in which these proportions of melodic form differ essentially from all visual and tactual proportions (for the proof how complete the difference is I must refer to my

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7th and 8th chapters), in that sense and in that degree the faculty which takes cognisance of them has a unique and independent character. There need be no more difficulty in admitting so much than in admitting that the *rationale* of tone-relationship propounded by Helmholtz finds no parallel in connection with the eye or the other sense-organs.

But now we come to the point of parting. Admitting (as I imagine he would) the uniqueness and independence up to the point indicated, Mr. Sully would still refer the characteristic pleasure of melody to discovered or discoverable laws and conditions lying outside of the particular operations in which the faculty follows and surveys the proportions presented to it. To him the uniqueness and independence of the faculty are not of so fundamental a sort, but that the most characteristic and individual effects of its exercise may be shown to have their root and essence in something more general than itself, in regions of idea and emotion external to that exercise, and which that exercise is a mere means of presenting or representing; the various actions of the faculty, as brought to bear on the various objects presented to it, being in fact but the turnings on of so many taps to

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these various reservoirs, where the act of turning is simply a *means*, and contributes no essential and independent ingredient to the æsthetic *result*.

Now, in respect of their *general influence* on Music, I have attached very great importance to those external regions of idea and emotion on which Mr. Sully dwells. But I am unable to connect them as he does with what I have called the *most characteristic and individual effects* of Music; and I proceed now briefly to develop what I mean by these italicised phrases. For it is just in this distinction between the *general* and the *individual* qualities of Music that the kernel of the difference between Mr. Sully and myself lies. In this distinction also lies the key of my whole argument; and I have therefore no resource but to try to suggest in a few pages what it needed as many chapters properly to elucidate.

I have urged again and again (especially in my 5th and 10th chapters) that the central fact and problem of Music lies in the *shortness* of the melodic forms in which the maximum or minimum of beauty may appear; in other words, in the extraordinary difference of pleasure-giving quality which, to any given person at any given time, may be presented by two bits of form each comprised within the

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narrowest limits. Till this fact is faced, it is worse than useless to go on and imagine we are getting nearer to the root of the matter by consideration either of the sensuous effects of mere sonorous impression on the nervous system, or of the artistic aspects of large compositions, such as their wide variety, happy contrasts, finely balanced parts, and so on.[1] And the fact, in itself so startling, has at any rate the advantage of giving us extremely definite touchstones by which to try the various explanations of melodic impressiveness which have been offered. If any proposed explanation fails hopelessly when confronted with this central fact; if its terms are found to apply equally to two forms which differ by the whole extent of giving consummate pleasure and giving no pleasure at all; it cannot be in any way what it professes to be, viz. an explanation of the pleasure.

[1] It may save confusion to point out that in discussing the characteristics of these aspects of musical timbre and of large structure, and their respective relations to the shorter and more closely organic combinations in which I find the fundamental fact of the musical art, I have frequently called the former *general* as compared with the latter; but that the general, opposed to the individual, characters discussed in this essay are those found in the *short combinations themselves*, and are such as, translated into the domain of vision, e.g. of faces, would amount to the possession of human features and expression, as distinct from the possession of beauty or special pleasure-giving quality.



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Of such professed explanations three stand out pre-eminent:—(1) that of discoverable points of structure, whether in matter of order and symmetry or of freedom and contrast, which may be connected with recognised general laws; (2) that of suggestion of physical movement or of physical impulse; (3) that of suggestion of the cadences of emotional speech. I must be satisfied here with the briefest reference to the arguments and examples by which I prove (as I conceive) the utter inadequacy of all of them.

First, as regards order and discoverable principles of adjustment, there are of course certain conditions of orderly structure which must be observed under pain of producing incoherent gibberish; but in Music these are so wide as to cover similarly the very cases whose felt difference is the thing to be accounted for. No observation of points of structure will yield us any law or laws, external to the single unanalysable impression in each case, which shall serve to separate successions of tones which give pleasure from others which give none. In my 9th chapter I have shown how little the element of order displayed in the *material* of Music—in tone-relationships and scales and so on—will account for degrees of beauty in melodic 'free

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forms'; and in my 8th chapter I have given instances of pairs of such forms, good and bad, in not one of which 'is a single technical point presented which could be for a moment mentioned as differentiating the good from the bad, or forming the slightest basis for an induction on the subject. Nor are the words *good* and *bad* here meant to refer to any acknowledged classification. Any individual, whatever his taste, who among the tunes he knows discriminates those which give him pleasure from those which do not, will find it entirely hopeless to form any generalisation of structural features which are present in the former and absent in the latter.' On this point Mr. Sully says: "The element of order in one of those vulgar and wearisome tunes which Mr. Gurney rightly despises after all counts for something, as might at once be seen by contrasting it with an unordered sequence of notes." Of course it counts for something, in the sense that it is a condition of the notes being comprehensible, construable as a unity; but being found in forms which are either neutral or negative as regards pleasure-giving quality, I fail to see how it can count for anything whatever as a distinction between the pleasurable and the non-pleasurable.

So much for *orderliness* of structure: as regards



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*freedom* and *contrast*, I must refer for my own views to my 10th chapter, §§ 8 and 9, but must devote some words here to Mr. Sully's criticism. Among the conditions of the "distinguishing beauty" of "admittedly beautiful melody," he says that "something may be set down to discoverable elements of form, as that very freedom which Mr. Gurney appears to look on as something inexplicable. The charm of a good deal of the best music is due, and is consciously referred, to some striking departure from familiar directions, which however is at the same time not otherwise disagreeable. It is curious, by the bye, that in an art which owes so much to a perception of individual freshness, Mr. Gurney nowhere assigns any æsthetic value to the humble quality of novelty." In saying that I assign no æsthetic value to novelty, Mr. Sully can hardly mean that I have not dwelt sufficiently on individuality or novelty as a *characteristic* of fine musical motive, that being a point which I have very specially emphasised. To quote two instances out of many—'The forms, when they occur, and so far as they are impressive, are each new and unique things, not like new expressions or postures, or alterations and reminiscences, of known things: each fresh melodic presentation which is profoundly

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felt is felt as till then wholly unknown.' 'The primary requisite, both in simple and elaborate musical work, is that it shall contain motives of individuality as well as beauty; for of Music more truly than of anything else may we say with Bacon "there is no excellent Beauty that hath not some strangenesse in the proportion."' All, then, that Mr. Sully can mean is that I do not regard the freedom and novelty felt in such motives to be properly an *explanation* of their effect. I certainly do not; it is part of the effect to be explained, or as I think *not* to be explained. It is a quality which can be perceived and judged of *only from within* the action of the musical faculty, in following and surveying the particular set of proportions. Precisely what has been said in reference to the pleasure-giving quality in general applies to this particular sub-quality. No look of notes on music-paper, no analysis of structure, no computation of numerical relations, will establish any sort of condition or set of conditions applicable to combinations which present freedom and novelty, and not to others which present triteness and tameness of contour. If in a sense it is legitimate to say that a combination is beautiful *because* it is free and novel, we then immediately ask, Why do we call

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it free and novel? and the only answer is that the musical faculty finds it so. When Mr. Sully goes on to speak of beauty as "guaranteed when the degree of agreeable divergence from the common run of compositions reaches a certain height, provided always that it is in itself a worthy and sufficiently complex result," the words scarcely look as if he were keeping steadily before his imagination the typical case to the test of which I must insist on bringing, in the first instance, every explanation of melodic beauty—the case of perfectly short and simple forms. Where and what is the "agreeable divergence" or the "striking departure from familiar directions" in the principal subject of the *Leonora* overture, or in *Batti batti*, or in *Angels ever bright and fair*, or in Schubert's *Forelle*, with its perfectly naïve and obvious strains such as a child might pick up in a moment, and its simple alternations of tonic and dominant harmonies—a tune of absolute commonness, were it not that the musical faculty pronounces it of extraordinary rarity?

As regards the sense of novelty in sound-shapes, and the autocratic faculty which judges of it, we may usefully contrast the appreciation of abstract form by the *eye*. The great difference is

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this: that the abstract visual form *never approaches complete abstraction* from the objects and facts of the external world. The general laws of growth, especially in vegetation, the general laws of the disposition of weight, especially in buildings, the association of ideas of force and spontaneity with curvature, owing to the constant exhibition of curves in the natural phenomena of land, sea, and sky—such elements make up a body of visual habit and instinct which must enter more or less into every æsthetic judgment. Thus the fact that a spire must stand upon its base, not its point, or that the more peaceful operations of nature tend to smoothness and symmetry, may have a distinct bearing on the impression that we receive from the most abstract linear pattern. It may be top-heavy, for instance, just as much as an inverted spire. And into this sort of instinct *other senses* than the visual very distinctly enter; to wit, the muscular and the tactile. Our objection to seeing things topple over, which is at the root of our instinct that a spire must not stand on its point, is a *muscular* objection, a faint representation of trouble in setting them up again. The contact of curves and continuous surfaces with the body is grateful, that of rough and irregular surfaces re-

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pellent, and so on. Thus, in respect of abstract visual forms, we cannot speak of any single or special 'faculty' by which the proportions are judged; such forms do not belong, like tunes, to a world apart, in which they are the only objects. And it is, no doubt, partly owing to the constant and inevitable reference of visual forms, however abstract, to real (and often hard) facts, that the eye feels a wrongness in novelties which deceive its expectations and balk its natural tendencies—in jags and interruptions, sharp unsymmetrical angles, and other unbalanced features; whereas, in sound-forms, which involve no such reference and are a law to themselves, the deception of the ear's expectations is not felt as wrong, and novel unsymmetrical turns of phrase are, as Mr. Sully and I agree, extremely frequent and delightful.

To return, however, to our main route. We have found that in respect of *structure*—of discoverable principles of order, or of freedom under conditions of order—we do not get an explanation, even in that most limited sense of inductive laws shown by observation to embrace and coincide with the pleasure-giving cases; much less a true explanation of their peculiar pleasure-giving quality. Next as to *physical movement.* Mr.

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Sully says: "I do not see that Mr. Gurney's idea derives much support from the contention that the 'Ideal Motion' of Music is something *sui generis*, for surely there is some analogy between the form-yielding motion of Music and the form-yielding movement of an object in space." I have devoted much space to an examination of the analogy of musical movement both to bodily movement and impulse and to external movement in space, and of all that it involves. What it does *not* involve is, most clearly, the solution of our problem—why, namely, of two brief combinations of notes which are exactly on a par in respect of this analogy, one gives the maximum of pleasure and the other none at all. In the present instance I need not dwell further on this fact, as it is not as specially bearing on that central problem that the topic is introduced by Mr. Sully; but its bearing on the uniqueness of the musical faculty cannot be altogether passed over. I have, in my 8th chapter, attempted to show how little the movement of an object in space can be truly called 'form-yielding,' in comparison with melodic movement. I can quote but a single fragment. *A propos* of a machine devised by Professors Perry and Ayrton, whereby the shadow of a ball, thrown on a variously

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illuminated surface, could be made to go through all manners of graceful movements, with variations of size and pace, and so to yield what they regard as visible music, I say:—'The progressive form, the Ideal Motion, of which each step is necessary to the whole—which is organic by dint of the relation of each component part to others, some of them separated from it by a very appreciable interval of time and, it may be, by a large number of intervening units of tone—is wholly due, as we have seen, to the fusion with *rhythm* of the *pitch*-element in which tone-relationship is the all-important feature. This is the sort of form unchangeable in each case, along which we pass in glad compulsion. No similar necessity, no true organism, could ever be discerned in the sequence of movements of the Professors' ball, however graceful and various. The eye might have its negative requirements, and resent irregular angularities of direction and violently sudden changes of pace; but the positive faculty of linking a long series of the swiftly vanishing impressions into a unity—that faculty which the unique sense of tone-relationship alone makes possible in the case of the ear—has no possible analogue in the case of vision, in the absence of any similar means

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of correlating the elements of a visual series.' This being so, I do not see how any one can deny the faculty to be *sui generis*, unless he is prepared to contend that other faculties than the musical, or other senses than the auditory, can take cognisance of pitch-relations. The musical faculty is at any rate *sui generis* to the extent of apprehending, and alone apprehending, this sort of motion; and Mr. Sully seems here to be implicitly denying it that amount of uniqueness and independence which at the beginning of this paper I credited him with accepting, and which seems necessarily involved in the simple fact that A picks up and remembers a tune which to B is a mere fortuitous succession of sounds.

The same remark applies to his next sentence: "Nor do I think that the idea of a unique faculty is greatly aided by the supposition of a special cogency in musical sequence, which I suspect is very much a matter of custom general or special (where the melody has become familiar), and depends on the fact, too lightly touched on by Mr. Gurney,[1] that melody is essentially a response to

[1] I have, however, more than once emphasised this particular point, and have included it (p. 175) in my list of the seven chief general characteristics of melody.

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a continually renewed attitude of expectant attention." I should find here, no doubt, a more particular point of difference if Mr. Sully means that the cogency of a fine motive may not be felt quite as much on the first as on the twentieth hearing; for by *cogency* I simply mean the sense that alteration either of notes or rhythm would destroy the individual organism. But so far as this is accepted, it connects itself with a sort of uniqueness in the apprehending faculty which I should have thought indisputable, whatever view might be taken on that further question of the influence of external references which I have regarded as the chief one in dispute between Mr. Sully and myself. Professor Stumpf also finds a difficulty in this matter of cogency. He compares the sequence of impressions in a melody to the series of visual or of gustatory impressions which we receive in a stroll through a park or in working through a well-arranged *menu*. Either of these series, he thinks, constitutes a whole, which is apprehended in the same way as the melodic whole. But is it possible that he considers the unity the same in kind? If his stroll or his dinner were interrupted in the middle, or if a portion of each were marred by some accident, would not his feeling be just that

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he had not had enough, or that for a certain portion of the time occupied his enjoyment had failed? Would not every moment that *was* enjoyed retain its full independent value? And would an individual thing, capable of surviving in memory as its exact self and nothing else, have been kept out of existence, if the items had been altered—if a portion of the path had been shadowed by oaks in stead of elms, or if salmon had been substituted for turbot? Clearly not; the sequences are perfectly loose and all but fortuitous. The sequence in a melody, on the other hand, is cogent and organic, just because its several moments have *no* independent value, and because a substitute of other items *would* render that particular thing abortive.

Before quitting the topic of physical movement, I must notice a view of considerable interest which was put forward by M. Georges Guéroult, in a review of my book published in the *Revue Philosophique* for April, 1882. He regards the visible movement to which music is truly analogous as something quite different from the harmoniously varied pattern producible by Professors Perry and Ayrton's machine. The true parallel, he thinks, must be found in the *gestures* of a great actor or orator. This comparison enables him to give a

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plausible-looking reply to my remark that, if the forceful character often felt in music really depended on such qualities of movement as are obviously akin to forceful movements presented to the eye in space, a rapid fortissimo study of Czerny's ought to be felt as more forceful than the quiet but irresistible motive which I quote from a Beethoven sonata. The study of Czerny's, he says, may be compared to the violent exertions of a person who is polishing a floor, or who has burnt his finger and moves it spasmodically to and fro to relieve the pain. The actor or the orator will actually move his body much less than this, but in so doing will affect our emotions much more. Yet (M. Guéroult argues) we do not regard the gestures associated with acting or with oratory as constituting a species of their own, distinct from all other physical movements; why then should musical movement be so regarded?

I must trebly dissent from this argument. In the first place, the movements of the living face and form *are* a class distinct from all other physical movements, in so far as they express emotions which other physical movements do not express. Movements of just the same pace and extent might be seen in other objects without

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rousing the slightest emotion. A bird's wings may vibrate with much the same motion as Lear's raised hands, in the gesture with which he accompanies the crisis of his denunciation ; a young tree may bend and sway beneath the wind with the same sort of movement as that with which Lear bows and rocks over the body of Cordelia ; but the bird and the tree rouse in us no sense of anger or despair. A twitch of the ear, which some people can give at will, reveals no trace of feeling ; an equal twitch of the upper lip might express a spasm of scorn or loathing. It is surely too obvious to need expounding that human gesture has become to us a revelation of emotion by a process of association which is wholly lacking in the case of all other movements. In the second place, even Talma's gestures would not have given much rapture, if they had gone on for half an hour or more, as the greatest musical compositions do, without receiving any support or justification from word and story. And in the third place, M. Guéroult's *rapprochement*, if meant as in any way explanatory of melodic effect, would covertly introduce the old pernicious fallacy—which yet he seems to agree with me in deploring—that Music is primarily a representative art, bound, like stage-gesture, to the

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perpetual depiction of recognised emotions and sentiments as they occur outside it, instead of being primarily a presentative art, bound to the perpetual production of pleasurable impressions that are otherwise unknown.

M. Guéroult goes on to argue for the greater 'effective' æsthetic movement in a production of real musical art, as compared with a Czerny study, by pointing to the similarity and monotony of figure which characterise the latter, in contrast to the ever varied and unexpected individualities of note and phrase in the former. The contrast is perfectly just; but clearly general description is not analysis. As regards variety, it is enough to observe—as before in respect of Mr. Sully's 'agreeable divergence from the common run of compositions'—that it is a quality far more identified with extended works than with the shorter quintessential passages which constitute our primary problem. Nobody will say that the separate sections of the Andante of the Pastoral Sonata, or of the Allegretto of the Seventh Symphony, impress us by dint of their *variety*, though the variety due to their juxtaposition is, of course, in the complete work, a point only secondary (*longo intervallo*) to their individual beauty. And as regards individuality, our former

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point again applies. The general condition that, for a bit of music consisting in movement to have artistic worth, it must present a certain freshness and spontaneity of movement, gives no clue whatever to the special conditions of the freshness in any particular case; that is to say, it affords us no means of discovering, apart from the particular impression that we receive, why one progression is felt as a surprise—takes us somehow into quite a new place in the tone-world—while another, though equally formed by a combination of notes which our ears have never previously encountered, produces not the slightest extension of our musical horizon.[1]

[1] Professor Stumpf objects to the marked distinction which I make between the *impressive* character of *all* the music that gives pleasure, and the definably *expressive* character (peaceful, joyful, gloomy, etc.) of *some* of it, on the ground that no sharp line can be drawn between the music which is and that which is not definably expressive—that there are any number of transition-stages. I have myself drawn attention to the fact, and cannot understand the objection. My position would be sufficiently established if I could point to a single musical passage—as a matter of fact I could of course point to thousands—which produced the distinctively musical exaltation, while yet not specially suggesting any single adjective drawn from the category of the emotions. And as for the inability to mark where definable expression begins, it would surely be legitimate to draw a clear distinction between abstract arrangements of lines and pictorial representation of objects, without marking an exact point at which the abstract arrangement might, perchance, suggest to the eye some vague outline of a concrete object.



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The remaining region of external reference which awaits discussion is that of *speech.* Here again, as in the case of physical movement, I have carefully dwelt on the general influence of speech on Music. To quote only a few sentences, I say that though 'every argument based either on structure or feeling confutes the idea of special relationships between the actual progressions of sound in the two cases,' yet 'the *general* bearing of speech on melody is none the less important; to it is due the vivid effect, which a fine melody produces, of being *something said*—a real *utterance* of transcendent significance. So prominent is this characteristic, that the impulse to project some sort of personality behind melodic strains seems absolutely irresistible. . . . The fact that I seem to myself to use the word *utterance* in a literal and not a metaphorical sense in respect of melody is an instinct which I cannot get behind, and which can only be entirely realised by those who share it. A splendid melodic phrase seems continually not like an object of sense, but like an affirmation; not so much prompting admiring ejaculation as compelling passionate assent. The impulse is to exclaim, "I should think so indeed!" rather than "How beautiful!" The delusion, if

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delusion it be, seems quite explicable by the general association with speech,' and so on.

But in this instance of speech, I have gone much beyond the admission of this most general influence. Though in my chapter on 'The Speech-theory' I have opposed to the utmost Mr. Spencer's view of a close and special connexion between musical cadences and speech-cadences, on which he bases the whole emotional effect of Music, I have attributed to speech a large share of the production in Music of definite nameable expressions, as tranquil, vivacious, capricious, and so on. Mr. Sully says: "Mr. Gurney's argument against Mr. Spencer is, I think, conclusive up to a certain point. Undoubtedly the resemblances between Music as we know it and speech are not close; undoubtedly different kinds of emotional speech sometimes have the same musical qualities. Nevertheless this does not disprove the contention that, in a general way, Music represents vocal utterance (a fact indeed which Mr. Gurney concedes); or that a particular melody tends to call up certain groups of feelings rather than others." Some particular melodies of course do. I have devoted a long chapter (chap. xiv.) and many examples to the elucidation of these 'groups of feelings,' and of the



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definitely *expressive* qualities of Music. It is true that I have referred these qualities not so much directly to *speech* as to facts of physical *impulse and gesture*, these being of a more universal and fundamental nature. But not only have I (at the end of the chapter on 'The Speech-theory') given speech special credit for certain more or less definite sorts of effect, in connexion with which I would fully accept Mr. Sully's description of musical beauty as "often inextricably bound up with obscure suggestions of feeling" (i.e. of feeling knowable and nameable outside Music); but I have said—'All those features of physical motion mentioned in the fourteenth chapter as having their counterparts in Music, which, as we saw, is able to suggest definite emotions so far as physical motions are themselves expressive of such emotions, may naturally be presented in speech. And the connexion of Music with the presentation of them in speech is naturally exceptionally close. For first, in the use of language under emotion there is not only the varied play of energy parallel to that which may be manifested by muscular exercise of other sorts, but this varied play takes effect in the actual material of Sound, and so obtains the widest and easiest channel for association with the art of Sound. And secondly,

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speech stands apart from other physical modes of expression in having normally a large amount of *continuity*,' and so on. But all this opens up no sort of connexion between speech and our central musical problem, which concerns a pleasure-giving or distinctively *im*pressive quality present in multitudes of cases where definable *ex*pressive quality is either absent or present only in the widest and vaguest way. The proof of this would only suffer by fragmentary quotation ; but I shall certainly be disappointed if any reader of my chapter on ' The Speech-theory ' remains unconvinced on two fundamental points : (1) the general futility of attempting to connect *in detail* melodies—genuine organisms the separate intervals and fragments of which give no more idea of them than a number of scattered bricks gives of a building, and might equally occur in melodies of the most diverse characters—with ' that infinite and indefinite medley which, under the name of " cadences of speech," we find talked of as a set of universally recognised successions of tones, appropriated, one apiece, to every shade of feeling we ever experience ;' (2) the hopelessness of getting any explanation of individual pleasure-giving effect of melodies from the *general* qualities (loudness, rapid variation of

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pitch, width of interval, &c.) on which Mr. Spencer dwells; inasmuch as 'the effect ($\alpha$) may be absent in the presence of all his conditions, ($\beta$) may be present in their absence.'

We have thus glanced at the three suggested bases of melodic beauty, one having to do with structure and order, the other two with suggestions of concrete external phenomena—movement and speech; and in none of the three do we find anything which will mark off for us those successions of tone which *have*, from those which *lack*, the particular quality presented as our central problem; the quality of producing, for any particular individual at any particular time, a particular impression, of which in innumerable cases no more precise description can be given than that it is in a unique way agreeable.

Should any reader of my book be led to agree with me so far, I do not think that he would feel the following further argument of Mr. Sully to be truly applicable:—"I think then that we are in a position to divine vaguely and imperfectly where the characteristic beauty of different compositions lies. Mr. Gurney's ably developed argument is really telling only against the mere formalist who holds that all beauty is resolvable into universal principles of

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form, and against the mere idealist who asserts that suggested emotion exhausts the mystery of musical charm. As against one who thinks that musical beauty is too complex a product to be explained by any one principle and depends on a subtle blending of many distinct influences, his argument looks very much like a fallacy of composition :—The charm of music is due neither to this, that, nor the other cause: therefore it is not due to all taken together." Recalling the fact that I am beginning at the beginning and dealing with the charm of distinct and short melodic forms, for which the vague general phrase 'charm of music' is a very equivocal substitute, I need only slightly expand Mr. Sully's last sentence, to be able to endorse it without laying myself open to any charge of fallacy :—I take two melodies, A with charm, B without; and I say, the charm of A is not due to order, for B is equally orderly; nor to suggestion of physical movement, for B bears just the same analogy to physical movement; nor to suggestion of speech, for B is just as suggestive (or unsuggestive) of speech: therefore it is not due to all taken together. What it *is* due to (primarily, at any rate) is the fact that the notes in A go one way and the notes in B another; that A presents one set of sound-proportions, and B another, to the

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single faculty which can judge of such matters; so that however much such a faculty may be *deus ex machinâ*, it can hardly be deemed 'unnecessary.' Rejecting this simple hypothesis, that the exercise which constitutes the *perception* of melodies as forms or unities has also a prime share in the *appreciation* and *enjoyment* of them, Mr. Sully finds what serves him at once as a solution of the problem, and as an excuse for the impossibility of making good its application to particular cases, in the *number* and *complexity* of the elements to which he would refer the enjoyable effect. Yet this bewildering host of subtly-fused ingredients turns out, when looked at, to reach the not very formidable number of three, which moreover are almost as easy to test as to count, and certain (if I am right) to be rejected on testing.

Mr. Sully thinks that I draw a too hard and fast line between beautiful and unbeautiful music. "To the scientific psychologist," he says, "there is no such distinction. Beauty is nothing but a special accumulation of pleasurable elements, and passes into the simply pleasant by insensible transitions. It is, as Mr. Cyples has well said, a massing of grateful impressions." This last point is certainly very generally true; though I must

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remark that a beloved melody has a most singular power of *seeming* simply intense, without suggesting any complex massing of various elements of effect; and though I must persist, as just shown, in rejecting the actually suggested elements *en masse* quite as much as separately. But as regards the hard and fast line, in the case of most people at any rate, it persists in drawing itself, for each individual, between certain bits of music which at a particular stage of his development give him the characteristic pleasure and those which do not. In dwelling on these cases, simply as being those which present the problem clearly and decisively, I in no way deny the existence of an enormous number of other bits, pleasurable in various degrees, which would bridge over the gap between the extremes. Nor do I see how my position is invalidated, as Mr. Sully and M. Guéroult think that it is, by the fact of wide differences in the scope and in the verdicts of the musical faculty in different individuals. Till we can in some way see round it, and trace (as we never shall trace) its innermost connexions with the organism, I do not see what right we should have to expect entire similarity in its operations—though I must add that with persons of 'good ear' who have had

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similar chances in the way of becoming early familiar with the same music, the similarity of perception and taste in this region is often quite exceptionally close, in spite of wide difference in all other respects of character and intellect; so that to this extent I should not object to endorsing the view which M. Guéroult attributes to me, that the beautiful is 'un caractère incorporé aux œuvres d'art d'une manière permanente, invariable.' Such a view, however, is not in the least implied in my position that what each person thinks beautiful in Music is discovered by himself, and for himself, in a manner which it is hopeless for him to analyse into elements of idea and emotion known outside Music.

My reply to Mr. Sully in these last paragraphs is also in great measure a reply to Professor Stumpf. As Professor Stumpf seems to agree with the whole of my adverse criticism of hitherto suggested explanations, while yet objecting to my view that the characteristic pleasure of melody does not admit of genuine analysis, I hoped that he had in store some fresh explanation of his own. I was disappointed, therefore, to find that he considered that I myself had laid down true 'principles of

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explanation,' of the pleasure, in the shape of certain very general conditions (such as the exceptional character of musical tone in the domain of sound, the listener's constantly renewed attitude of expectation, the dim analogies with verbal utterance, &c.), most of which are equally realised by music that gives *no* pleasure. By extending the list of such general conditions he expects to carry analysis almost to the very heart of the matter. Thus, when I point out an initial obstacle to the analysis of melodic effect, in the absolute fusion of the rhythm and the pitch, the *time-values* and *scale-values*, of the component notes—neither element having any melodic value apart from the other—he imagines that he meets me by saying that certain characteristics of single notes can be analysed; for instance, that we can understand the association of different sorts of feeling with a soft deep note, a soft high note, a loud deep note, and a loud high note; and that we can account for the respective effects of a diminuendo and a crescendo in ascending and in descending passages! I confess that I cannot understand how a person who has ever enjoyed in a really possessing way eight bars of quiet tune can think that he is even approaching the heart of that matter by multiplying considerations

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irrelevant to the unity and individuality which are its very self. And I seem to read a sort of doubt even in the words of Professor Stumpf. For he prefaces this portion of his critique by a warning that I exaggerate the strength and depth of the musical impression ; that the real might of Music is only exercised on scattered individuals at favourable moments ; that some people do not even care about it ; and that the explanation which he desiderates is of the effective residue of enjoyment after all these allowances have been made. So that perhaps, after all, we are talking about different things ; and he may be content to leave out of his account as abnormal and sporadic those experiences of 'strength and depth' with which I am primarily concerned, and the extreme commonness of which is to me the most certain and the most important fact of contemporary æsthetics.

The only direction in which Professor Stumpf attempts to work out his view with any detail is that of analysing the effect of melody into the independent characters of some of its component intervals. He quotes with applause some sentences of Hanslick's, to the effect that every separate musical element, and therefore every isolated interval, has a fixed physiognomy, and makes a definite æsthetic

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impression, the study of which constitutes the philosophy of Music. Exactly to the same extent as the study of an artist's palette, prepared with all the tints that he requires for his work, constitutes the philosophy of Painting. But if anything further had been needed to convince me of the hopelessness of such 'analysis,' Professor Stumpf's attempt would have supplied what was wanting. He reminds me that I have myself ascribed definite expression to the characteristic thirds of the major and the minor scale; and he adds that the ascent of a fourth from the dominant to the tonic has in it something specially active, and that the ascent of a fifth from the tonic to the dominant has a character of solemn expectation. Sixths, like every one else, he considers agreeable; sevenths, bold and pert (*keck*). He is too candid not to admit that the expression even of the most definitely expressive of these intervals is not constant—that e.g. the composer sometimes deliberately annuls the 'something specially active' of the ascending fourth; and this alone would suggest a doubt as to how far the analysis had really penetrated. But, in fact, to imagine that melody receives an explanation from points of 'expression' like these is like imagining that a painter could produce a striking portrait of a person

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whom he had never seen, on the strength of knowing that on one day he had smiled and on another had looked grave. The intervals, all or any of them, may occur again and again in the most diverse melodic forms—pretty, ugly, trivial, sublime. I have shown by examples (*The Power of Sound*, pp. 152–3) how changes of the time-values of the notes may make of the self-same succession of intervals two results as different as Apollo and a satyr. In the face of such facts we shall scarcely accept the vague and inconstant ethical colourings of a minority of the intervals —for by far the commonest interval, the second, has none at all—presented in an order which, from the point of view of definable emotional experience, is the merest jumble, as an aid towards understanding the intensely individual and peremptory revelations of impressive tunes. Certain qualities of certain items which are as frequent in some namby-pamby ballad as in *Dove Sono*, in some vile street-jig as in the *Rosamunde* ballet-music, will not carry us very far into Mozart's and Schubert's secret.

In support of his view, Professor Stumpf cites an example of my own—a melody from *Fra Diavolo*, in which sixths alternate with sevenths—and remarks that, having ascertained sixths to be pleasing

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and sevenths pert when the intervals are taken separately, we recognise these same characters in them in the melody. Now, I must take leave to doubt whether it would have at all occurred to him to describe the ethical character of sevenths in isolation as *keck*, if he had regarded them really in isolation. The illusion, when one takes an interval out of a melody, that it retains the character that one seemed to see in it *in* the melody, is a very natural one, because we have not truly cleared the melody out of our minds; it is faintly represented in the very act by which we attempt to judge the 'isolated' interval. Will Professor Stumpf really assert that *Keckheit* is a recognised character of sevenths? Can he quote even a single other person who has ever so described them? Moreover, one of the four sevenths in the bars which he quotes is a major seventh; and on his principles it would be an extraordinary thing if intervals so distinct from one another as the major and the minor seventh presented the same ethical character.

But let this pass. Let us suppose for the moment that we all know that a seventh is pert, just as we all know that a sixth is suave. That is a reason, forsooth, why the tune in which these intervals for a time alternate is a thing of beauty

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which clings to the inner ear! Rapid alternations of a sense of suavity with a sense of pertness make, it appears, a self-justified æsthetic combination, of which it might be said *à priori* that if ever realised in musical intervals it would yield a beautiful melodic form.[1] But why is that combination superior *à priori* to rapid alternations of a sense of suavity with, say, a sense of solemn expectation? This, on Professor Stumpf's principles, should give us fifths instead of sevenths to alternate with our sixths; and the result is the hideous abortion into which I have converted Auber's melody (p. 198). Professor Stumpf admits that thus arranged the notes 'lose their sense;' and actually reproaches me with having, in so arranging them, thrown overboard considerations of melodic structure! As if my whole aim were not to show that it is structure, and not vague impressions of

[1] Professor Stumpf says that 'the sixths define the effect of the whole far more than the sevenths,' feeling, perhaps, that suavity must preponderate over pertness if the mixture is to be agreeable. Even this subsidiary point is characteristic of the difference between us. So far as my pleasure in the whole is quickened at certain instants rather than at others, it is undoubtedly at the instants of the *sevenths*, when the 'Ideal Motion' wins its way over and lands one the other side of that less obvious interval. And I should be surprised if the experience of most people who care for the tune did not coincide with mine.

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suavity and pertness, that is the vital thing! I take a tune, and say that its pleasurable effect on us is due to its having, thanks to the genius of its constructor, a particular shapeliness which our ears apprehend with ease, while yet with a sense of being exercised in a fresh and rare way. Professor Stumpf, on the other hand, holds that its effect on us (or much of it) is due to the presentation of a considerable amount of suavity and pertness by its component items. I apply an obvious test, and (preserving its harmonic basis) I dislocate it as a melodic shape, while leaving to its component items their former amount of suavity, and another quality quite as æsthetic as pertness; and I ask what has become of its pleasurable effect. All gone, he admits; but my test proves nothing, because I violated the conditions of shapeliness by dislocating it! Professor Stumpf, by the way, ventures on a little dislocation on his own account, and considers the question why it would be unsatisfactory (fatal, rather) to substitute descending thirds for the ascending sixths. His answer is that this descending movement would be 'rather insipid.' We live and learn. Not only are sevenths by nature pert, but descending thirds are by nature insipid; witness the opening of the C



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Minor Symphony! If this is psychological analysis, I must be content to remain what Professor Stumpf calls me—a sceptic in the things of psychology. But would he reply that he did not mean that descending thirds were by nature insipid, but only that they would be insipid in this particular place? If so, could there be a clearer abandonment of the claim to have analysed the melody? Instead of the elements explaining the effect of a particular combination, the particular combination has to be invoked to explain the effect of the elements.

I need notice only one further argument. Referring to the fact that melodies, when repeated in the course of a piece, are often more or less modified in phrase, whereby their character is to some extent but not fundamentally changed, Professor Stumpf remarks that this shows that different melodies present common elements of effect, and that definite modifications produce a definite heightening or qualitative charge of impression; and that, therefore, melodies do not elude analysis, and my 'nativism' is broken in two. How can my nativism possibly be concerned to deny that successions of notes which are in large measure identical present common elements of

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effect? Two faces, each of which is unmistakeable, may surely present a family likeness. And what sort of connexion is there between the fact that a complete melody consists of phrases, alteration of one or more of which will alter the impression, and the fact that the distinctive charm, in whatever melodic phrase or melodic whole it may be found, cannot be accounted for by a consideration of the separate elements—the bricks and mortar—from the combination of which it results? Of course a tune may be practically analysed, in the sense of being looked at in parts; and in any part which is a sufficiently large and integral a portion of the whole, part of the effect of the whole may be found to survive. But how can this possibly be represented as analysis *of the effect*. Pushed a little further, analysis of this sort is, of course, so far from being explanatory that it destroys what there was to explain. As we cut the tune into smaller and smaller bits, the effect wholly disappears from all of them, just as the beauty would disappear from a face which we dissected into smaller and smaller pieces.

Professor Stumpf concludes his critique by some paragraphs on the subject of consonance and harmony. He seems in one way to exaggerate the



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difference here between the view of Helmholtz, with which I in the main agree, and his own. I consider the fundamental fact in the pleasure of consonance to be the blending of two tones in such a way that each seems to some extent lost in the combination, which strikes us as a single new thing. The same idea is represented in Professor Stumpf's *Verschmelzung und Krasis*; though he strangely seems to think that the problem is not why we sometimes perceive simultaneous tones as one, but why we ever perceive them as two. I regard the blending as a consequence of the sufficiently smooth on-flowing of the two tones, uninterrupted by beats. I do not say that the one thing *accounts* for the other, in the sense that we should *à priori* have expected the blending of the tones from their smooth parallelism. The fact could only be explained physiologically by much more minute knowledge of the nervous processes than we have as yet attained; and I doubt if a psychological explanation is even possible. At any rate I am pretty confident that we get no nearer it by talking, as Professor Stumpf does, of 'a perception of the relation of blending,' and of a multitude of representations, drawn from an outer life of love and sadness, which associate themselves (how and why

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we are not told) with this perception. When the smooth parallel flow is interrupted by beats, not only is the agreeable blending prevented, but a disagreeable impression is produced, of which we can picture (though with difficulty, as I have shown in my Appendix 'On Discord') some sort of physiological explanation. Professor Stumpf seems to hold that beats have nothing to do with the sensation of discord. I cannot understand this scepticism. The discord of a second, for instance, is perceived actually in the making, as two notes in unison are gradually separated. The beats are at first so slow that they can be easily counted; and as they gradually become too quick to count the characteristic sensation appears and increases. Nor can I see the force of Professor Stumpf's objection that the discord is felt to be the same in different octaves, though the beats double in number with each octave of ascent. The *discordant interval* is felt as the same, because it *is* the same; and as for the *discord*, the mere unpleasant sense of jar, I doubt if it has any specific qualitative character. Thus the mere doubling in number of the physical nervous events which produce the jar would not be bound to introduce any qualitative difference—any more than

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doubling the rate at which I scrape my arm with a finger-nail would produce any qualitative difference in the pain. But on this topic Professor Stumpf has not developed his view at sufficient length, in the pamphlet which I am considering, for it to be profitable to pursue the controversy.

A few words must be added as to that single range of extra-musical association to which I have allowed high value in connexion with the characteristic melodic pleasure; that, namely, which appears in Darwin's theory of the primeval use of Music under conditions of sexual excitement, and its consequent transfusion with highly exciting emotional elements. As to this Mr. Sully says: "Is it not surely more philosophic to say that the more recent yet far extending ages of human converse with their vast accumulation of emotional experience must have had at least as much effect on Music as the very remote and at the same time limited experiences of love-making among our pre-human Jubals? Mr. Gurney may say that the link of association is distinct in the two cases. But one may still ask whether the pleasure given to some anthropoid ape by the exercise of his embryonic musical faculty can easily be supposed to

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resemble in quantity or quality the pleasure given to a fully-developed modern ear so closely as to account for the wonderfully far-reaching transmission of emotional effect." But he is here scarcely putting himself at my point of view. The reason why I can accept Darwin's suggestion is that I think it possible (though extremely difficult) to connect it with that discriminating and autocratic character of the musical faculty, which is to me so prime a fact both of experience and of inference. But for this, Darwin's theory would be open (as he himself most candidly admitted to me) to the very same objection that I have found to Mr. Spencer's and the other hypotheses which we have been considering; namely, that its *generality* wholly precludes its meeting our point—that it could at most only help us to see why Music is emotional (which it too often is not), and not in the least why certain progressions of sound are felt as having a characteristic pleasurable quality unfelt in others.

I do not quite feel the weight of Mr. Sully's remarks about the remoteness of the suggested source; or rather, feeling their weight, I still feel that it represents only the kind of imaginative effort which in our day is being perpetually de-

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manded of the evolutionist; for we are surely now familiar with the notion of the enormous remoteness of the time, and the crudeness of the material from which our various mental faculties have been developed and sublimated. I have explained (in my 6th and 14th chapters) in what way I think the remoteness and crudeness in this case even favourable to my application of the hypothesis. Here I can but refer again in passing to that particular fact of musical emotion which was prominent in our discussion of the musical faculty, and in which, though Darwin (being professedly unmusical) did not mention it, the real relevance and explanatory power of his facts seems to me to lie; the fact, namely, that 'Music is perpetually felt as strongly emotional while defying all attempts to analyse the experience or to define it even in the most general way in terms of general emotions;' that it presents 'phenomena charged with feeling, and yet in whose most characteristic impressiveness separate feelings seem as fused and lost as the colours in a ray of white light;'—which is 'precisely what is explained, if we trace the strong undefinable affection to a gradual fusion and transfiguration of such overmastering and pervading passions as the ardours and desires of primitive

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loves,' and so on. And remembering Darwin's case of the gibbon, I see no objection to supposing the enjoyment taken in note following note by our semi-human ancestors to have been akin, however little comparable in degree, to our enjoyment of note following note in a modern 'subject,' the embryonic strain containing in embryo that element of *musical order* which is characteristic of the developed one and is conspicuous by its absence in speech.

But while I do not fully share Mr. Sully's exact difficulty on this subject, in the application of Darwin's theory I do find a difficulty of the most serious kind, which has never I think been recognised—or more precisely speaking, what has not been recognised is that Darwin's idea can be brought to bear on what I have called the central problem of Music only by a mode of application which involves this difficulty. For its discussion I must refer to my 6th chapter, § 7: put in the briefest way, in lies in the process by which contact with the emotional spring suggested by Darwin can be supposed to be made and broken in the cases of impressive and unimpressive melody respectively. 'There is this fundamental distinction between the relation of Association to Form in the

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visual and auditory regions, that in the former it is prominently connected with *special forms* (notably e.g. with the contours of faces and figures), while in the latter it' (i.e. the particular and all-important range of sexual association to which Darwin points) 'can only be connected with a *special mode of exercise*'—that of the musical faculty—and *not* with any definite melodic forms common to us and our semi-human progenitors. We have to attribute to this faculty an independent view, an independent power of being satisfied, a discriminating sense of proportion in virtue of which one bit of its exercise proves immeasurably superior to another, while holding at the same time that the satisfactory result is *not felt* in independence of the emotional flow from the associational source to which it opens a passage, and to which the satisfactoriness or impressiveness *as we know it* should be mainly due. This difficulty, I confess, seems to me scarcely less than that of leaving Darwin's suggestion on one side.

There is one subsidiary topic on which Mr. Sully again seems hardly to meet my point. In reference to the statement (in my 1st chapter) of the great difficulty which exists in accounting for the extraordinary delicacy and complexity of the

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auditory apparatus, whether by direct adaptation or by natural selection, he says that as regards the latter I seem slightly to overstate the case: since, "in the case of man at least, it may be plausibly contended that the perfect discrimination of vocal sound as to its quality or timbre and general level or height, even of the rough and constantly shifting sound which seems to characterise primitive speech, would involve an organ for the discrimination of pitch;" and "among all gregarious and social species endowed with a vocal organ . . . the structures supposed to be specially concerned in the perception of musical quality would tend to be evolved by natural selection." But he does not notice the important argument of Mr. Spencer of which I have quoted some sentences, and which I have never seen in any way answered. The argument is that "as fast as essential faculties multiply, and as fast as the number of organs that co-operate in any given function increases, indirect equilibration by natural selection becomes less and less capable of producing specific adaptations, and remains fully capable only of maintaining the general fitness of constitution to conditions;" and again, "as fast as the number of bodily and mental faculties increases, and as fast as the maintenance

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of life comes to depend less on the amount of any one, and more on the combined action of all, so fast does the production of specialities of character by natural selection alone become difficult." I have given my reasons for holding that the delicate discrimination both of colour and pitch must be referred to an epoch when this argument would have its full strength. Speculation in those conveniently remote regions seems to me often scarcely to realise what it is about, in invoking the whole machinery of natural selection for minute changes of all sorts, at stages of development sufficiently advanced to make the invocation of the principle even for some very decided improvement of a *single* organ decidedly unsafe.

I part from my critics with regret. Though I have naturally dwelt here on points of difference, I should be sorry that they should not know what warm gratification I have derived from their very cordial reception of my attempt. I am even grateful to them—a gratitude which I can scarcely expect my readers to share—for the occasion rapidly to retrace some of the drier portions of my former course in the present reply. I linger round a subject which has been to me, for as long

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as I can remember, both a central interest and—from the lack of natural facility and early training—a chronic torment. How many people, I wonder, fully realise the significance of a lifelong craving for a particular outlet of expression, in one to whom the mechanical means, lavished on numbers who set no special store by them, are denied? Perhaps the experience is common enough—part of its poignancy is that it is almost always bound to be dumb. For proper expression of it, the artist *manqué*, standing hungrily aside and applauding others for their familiar intercourse with the divine mistress to whom he has sacrificed in vain, might be commended to Mr. Browning as the subject for a dramatic monologue. One thing, at any rate, is tolerably certain: that had the facility and the training been mine, and had I become a master of the art instead of being dragged at its chariot-wheels, I should have troubled myself but little, and others less, with speculations respecting it. And in that case I should have been incomparably the richer, and the world not much the poorer. Yet I should like to think that there are a few lovers of Music to whom its popular aspects and possibilities (for to these every one of my arguments directly or indirectly points) have been

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somewhat more clearly brought home by what I have written. The more quickly the grounds of the unique position of Music in the world of feeling are recognised, the more quickly will the possibilities become realities. In such a thought might lie some possible compensation for having had to deliver myself *about* Music, instead of *in* it. That, for me, is a fate which even those transcendentalists and higher interpreters who are most repelled by the Philistine character of the deliverances might deem an ample expiation of them; and it would at least be alleviated by the assurance of having helped, in however humble a measure, to rationalise and humanise the fermenting enthusiasm which a little more insight and a little more faith might convert into the most fruitful form of philanthropy.

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